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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Lexico-Grammatical Analysis of Translated Japanese Immigration Law

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**Abstract:** Legal language is a specialized language. However, it is not universal, although its uniqueness and specialty in every legal language are ubiquitous. The lexical and grammatical aspects of legal texts have not been the subject of much attention as there is an evident dearth of research on this aspect of the legal language. The present study is, therefore, the first study that has looked at lexical and grammatical features of the Japanese immigration law, which has been translated into English. The sum of 70,000 words in selected immigration acts, which were translated from 2020 to 2021, was used as data set in the present study. The result reveals that lengthy sentences and nominalized sentences along with verb discontinuities were prevalent in the present study. An interesting finding in the present study is the existence of fewer binominal and multinominal phrases, which contradicts the results from previous studies. The robust phenomenon of plain English movement may play a role in less frequent occurrences of multinominal phrases in the present study. This study provides some future pedagogical implications for legal texts that have been translated.

**Keywords:** Grammatical analysis, Japanese law, immigration law, forensic linguistics

On February 19, 2021, the Japanese Diet made an official announcement to revise the legislation regarding the immigration law and refugee asylum policy, which was a part of the endorsement by the United Nations in 2020 (Akimoto, 2021). Non-Japanese nationals have attempted to migrate to Japan, yet due to the limited sources of the legal documents in English, many stumble upon understanding the Japanese law; hence, they may solely depend on agencies or end up giving up on their entries to Japan. Being one of the world-leading countries that should voluntarily accept

immigrants and refugees per se, Japan has somehow stifled the promulgation of the English language into official documentation and law. This postulation also resonates with the immigration law in Japan, which has been criticized for decades. Excellent personnel who wish to be a part of the team members that help Japan survive in such an international, competitive world may face a big challenge in their attempts to migrate to Japan.

When one wishes to migrate to a foreign country, it is crucial to have basic legal knowledge in the

country. With the availability of the internet, one can easily search for information regarding immigration-related laws; however, legal information that is available online may be vulnerable to manipulation or misleading information, which can cause misinterpretation. Therefore, it is critical, especially for those who wish to migrate to a foreign country and even to apply for employment in that country, to have foundational knowledge of the legal system and immigration policies that the country sets for its immigrants and foreign nationals. They are, therefore, responsible for checking the official websites (for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan or the Ministry of Justice) to obtain authentic information regarding visa status and immigration policies.

Legal language is indeed a specialized language (Bhatia, 1993; Coulthard & Johnson, 2007, 2010; Richard, 2018). Legal language is not universal, yet its uniqueness and specialty in every legal language are, in fact, ubiquitous. Legal language is a special linguistic genre, and it is rigorous when it comes to the lexical and grammatical aspects. When identifying the language of the law, Bhatia (1993, p. 13) specifically wrote that there are four dimensions that need to be considered: (a) the purpose of communication, (b) contexts, (c) activities and events which the language is involved in, and (d) social settings in which the interlocutors take part. Given these dimensions, the language of the law can be construed with the knowledge of technical words in the law. Linguists have investigated legal language for decades; however, it is deemed to be fewer than the other types of linguistic genres (Bhatia, 1993). The present study is the first to investigate the lexical and grammatical aspects of Japanese law that have been translated into the English language. The dearth of research in this area will shed light on not only how the Japanese law functions for non-Japanese speakers but also on what kind of lexical and grammatical functions are prevalent in the English translation of Japanese law. In the next section, I will describe the previous studies that have been conducted on the lexical and grammatical analysis of legal texts. Then I will describe the theoretical framework that I utilize for the present study, along with the methodology of the research. Finally, I will present the result along with discussions that delineate the features of lexicons and grammar in Japanese immigration acts.

## Grammatical Analysis of Legal Language

When one hears the word “language in the law,” it is unavoidable for them to get an image of the complexity of the grammar and lexicons (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007, p. 42). Chovanec (2013) gave a statement in regards to grammar and legal language: “it [grammar] can be the actual bone of contention in disputes over the interpretation of complex legal language” (p. 1). It is no doubt that understanding the grammar of the legal language is critical when one tries to read and understand the texts. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) added to this consensus that one of the most special features that the legal language carries is the ambiguity of lexical and grammatical aspects. Based on different interpretations, one may be jailed or free to walk outside the jail. Hence, the ambiguity of the legal language prevails by using redundant and technical words. Solan (2010) wrote in the light of ambiguity that “[A] syntactic ambiguity typically leaves only two or three reasonable interpretations of a statute. Once a court decides which of them wins out, the problem goes away” (p.49). Ambiguity in legal language is also described as “vagueness” by Marmor (2014), who asserted that there is no clear-cut line between what is stated in the law and how it is interpreted. Vagueness perhaps can also be explained by the use of lengthy and complex sentences in legal texts (Crystal & Davy, 1969). The reason behind such characteristics of the legal language perhaps may be found in how the legal language was constructed. The construction of the legal language can be traced back to the time when the law was being recorded in written forms; the first legal expert who initiated to investigate the lexical aspects of the law was Mellinkoff (1963). His systematic definition of the legal lexicons revealed the complexity and obscurity of the legal language specifically speaking of its lexicons. Language in the law, hence, can be verdict to be one special kind.

Legal language, having the characteristics of ambiguity and complexity, is considered an established genre that differs from any other field. Utilizing Bhatia’s genre analysis, Gocheco (2011a) investigated the lexicon and grammar of Philippine English in the law of real estate. Her findings revealed that on the sentence length, the average number of words was around 51 words per sentence; this means that the number of words is a lot longer than the texts in general (Bhatia, 1993). One of her interesting findings is that

the legal texts in Philippine English did not contain any complex prepositional phrases. This contradicted the existing literature that legal texts make use of complex prepositional phrases (Bhatia, 1993; Mellinkoff, 1963; Swales & Bhatia, 1983). Gocheo (2011b) further analyzed lexical items in civil code in the Philippines. Her findings showed that the use of single verbs (in her case, it was categorized as “monotransitive” verbs) was the most prevalent item out of all the verbs. She stated that the reason why the frequent occurrence of monotransitive verbs was to give a “straightforward way of giving information through its simple clausal structure” (p. 10). Additionally, Badger’s (2003) study highlighted the importance of understanding lexico-grammatical aspects of legal texts. His analysis indicates that sentences that contain indefinite nominal phrases, which signify the generality of the context, whereas the inclusion of personal names and even past perfect tense signals the specificity of the context in legal texts. Badger (2003) did not provide a full-blown lexical and grammatical description of legal texts (in his case law cases reports in the newspapers) *The Guardian* and *The Times*; he shed light and emphasized the significance of understanding the function of lexicon and grammar in legal texts. Richard’s (2018) historical summary of legal language reveals that the language of the law went through several processes, such as “lexical borrowings” from different languages (i.e., French, Latin) and even from different domains that are not related to the law (p. 3–4). Legal language often uses words that contain “hypernyms” and “weasel words,” which lead non-professionals and experts to misinterpret the legal texts (Richard, 2018).

From a different theoretical point of view, Wiredu (2016) has looked into the use of complex sentences in news reports of a court ruling in Ghana. Employing Halliday’s systemic grammar as a theoretical framework, Wiredu (2016) enumerated the high frequency of hypotaxis structures and various dependent clauses (i.e., infinitival, interrogative). This means that instead of a full sentence, the legal texts in his study utilized more dependent clauses within the sentences. Legal language can be examined at the syntactical level, such as the use of *if*-conditional clauses, passive voice, and present tense are the most prevalent (Crystal & Davy, 1969; Chovanec, 2013). Strati and Enesi (2019) provided a contrastive analysis of syntax in the legal language of English and Albanian. Their findings revealed common features in both

languages in terms of tense (present and future), form (passive voice), and modal verbs (i.e., shall). The use of passive voice is prevalent in the language of the law, which has been elucidated by other research (Malcom & Johnson, 2007, 2010).

It is then safe to postulate that legal language differs from any other type of text. Although several studies have scrutinized the lexical and grammatical aspects of legal texts, the paucity in the area is still salient. Therefore, I wish to fill the gap by utilizing the Japanese law that has been translated into English. As far as I am aware of, this present study is the first study that employs Japanese law as a data set to delineate its lexical and grammatical features of the legal texts from Japan.

## Theoretical Framework

The present study is aimed to analyze the lexical and grammatical features of the Japanese immigration law; hence, I adapted Bhatia’s (1993) first analysis of linguistic realization in the law, which is lexico-grammatical analysis. Bhatia’s framework was chosen because the previous studies (e.g., Gocheo, 2011a) have made use of Bhatia’s linguistic analysis in legal language. I chose this framework to expand the conversation on the unique characteristics of legal language with a set of data that has never been used in analysis before. This analysis consists of the length of the sentence, characteristics of nouns, prepositional phrases, multinomial phrases, and syntactic discontinuities (Bhatia, 1993, pp. 193–197). Prepositional phrases are constructed as *Preposition (P) + Noun (N) + Preposition (P)*. Multinomial phrases consist of sequential adverbs such as “and” and “or” (see Table 1 for a summary of Bhatia’s theoretical framework).

In legal language, these two adverbs are interchangeably used (also in Coulthard & Johnson, 2007, 2010). These are identified as binominal and multinomial phrases in Bhatia (1993). Syntactic discontinuities consist of nouns that are divided within the sentences. In other words, the words are discontinued in a sentence. For example, noun discontinuity takes up the pattern like the following:

Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (2018) If *an application* has been submitted

**Table 1**

*Summary of Lexical-Grammatical Analysis of Legal Text (Adapted from Bhatia, 1993, pp. 195–202)*

| Features                         | Example  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Length of the sentence(s)        | One single sentence contains '271 words' whereas '27.6 words' in normal written texts    |
| Nominal                          | The power to make regulations under this section shall be exercisable.                   |
| Complex prepositional phrases    | for the purpose of; in accordance with   |
| Binomial and multinomial phrases | advice and consent; wholly and exclusively   |
| Syntactic discontinuities        | A secure tenant has the right - (a) a written notice... (b) a written notice denying ... |

by a foreign national who is a resident with a status of residence set forth in the left-hand column of the Appended Table I, in accordance with the procedures provided for by Ministry of Justice Order, *to engage* in activities of managing business involving income or activities ...

Subjects are generally followed by the verb and the object in the English language (Quirk et al., 1985). In the example, "to engage in activities" thus is a nominalized phrase. However, this phrase is not followed right after the verb; instead, the verb "has been submitted" has been followed by the inversion of prepositional phrases such as "in accordance with the procedures." Verb discontinuities and multinominal discontinuities also occur and are a part of syntactic discontinuities.

Identification of such lexical and grammatical features of the law will reveal the universality and ubiquity of the legal texts, although there may be a possibility of discrepant features in different legal texts. In the present study, I will utilize the texts from the translation of the immigration acts in Japan. Such legal texts will divulge the unique linguistic features in the language of the law, particularly in the context of the laws translated in English from Japanese. As I mentioned the research gap earlier, the present study is, therefore, going to describe lexical and grammatical features of the legal texts that have been translated into English from Japanese.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were constructed to draw lexical and grammatical features of the

Japanese immigration law that have been translated into English. The present study is expected to elicit such features for non-experts who wish to come to Japan as an immigrant or a worker.

1. What kind of lexical features can be found in Japanese immigration law in English? (a) in terms of length of sentences/number of words, and (b) use of complex phrases
2. What kind of grammar can be found in Japanese immigration law in English in terms of nominal, prepositional phrases, multinominal phrases, and syntactic discontinuity?

Following the framework of Bhatia (1993), the first research question will delineate the features of lexicons in the Japanese immigration acts in terms of the number of words and the use of complex phrases. The second research question, according to Bhatia's grammatical analysis, is going to answer the grammatical features of the immigration acts in terms of their prevalent grammatical forms. Understanding the linguistic features of the legal language is integral not only in the legal context but also in the academic field. This study will also be useful for ESL/EFL teachers who plan to teach students in the department of law in Japan. The paucity of research on linguistic features of the legal language is obvious. Moreover, this present study, to my knowledge, is the first study that has investigated Japanese law in English. This initiative will not only describe the features of Japanese law in English but also predicate the impetus for future research to be done on the same or similar topics.

## Methods

### Corpus

The transcripts of the immigration law were downloaded manually from the Japanese Law Translation Database System (<http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/>) The website stated that the translations are not to be used officially as all are responsible for consulting and checking the original Japanese texts. Although the data does not carry the legal stance on its own, all of the translations available on the website were produced by the Ministry of Justice in Japan. Hence, the translation of the legal texts on the website is valid and reliable. According to the Japanese Law Translation Database System, the process of translation takes several revisions, which have been revised by legal experts and native speakers of English. The website does not mention specifically who is in charge of the revision of the translation, but the website provides the “initial version” and “finalized version” of the texts. For the present study, I selected finalized version of the translation so that the texts would not be changed.

For the purpose of the study, I selected the most recent immigration law that has been amended, translated, and finalized, dating from 2015 to 2021. The accumulation of the texts is based on the three immigration acts, which sum up over 70,000 words (see Table 2 for information on each Act). For the average number of words in a sentence, I manually identified and highlighted each sentence by using the word count function on Microsoft Word. After manually writing down the number of words, I then inserted all the numbers in Excel to draw the average number of words per sentence. For identification of the nominal, multinomial phrases, and syntactic

discontinuity, I read the whole texts line by line and underlined the words that indicate those categories. For the rest of the features, I utilized AntConc software to draw frequency counts of concordances (Anthony, 2020).

Text 1 in the present study is “Act on proper technical intern training and protection of technical intern trainees, Act #89 (2016)”. This Act was first established along with Immigration Control Act in 1951. However, due to burgeoning numbers of foreign nationals that come to Japan as interns, Act No. 89 (henceforth text 1) was implemented as a provision of the overall immigration act. Amendment of Act No. 102 of 2018: Special act on the immigration control of, inter alia, those who have lost Japanese nationality pursuant to the treaty of peace with Japan was coded as text 2 in the present study. This Act was first implemented in 1986 yet was amended in 2018. Because Japan does not allow dual citizenship, this Act intends to help those who have lost their Japanese nationality due to the treaty of peace in 1945. For text 3, Amendment of Act No. 63 of 2019: Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was encoded. This Act is for foreign nationals who seek their refugee or asylum status in Japan. These three texts were chosen based on the aforementioned reasons; however, these three texts’ common theme differs in the context. Hence, these three texts were included in the present study.

### Procedure

The corpus that I used for the present study is available online. Because this is shared in public, and the website approves of the data being used for academic purposes, I visited the website, selected the texts, and downloaded them in word documents and text format.

**Table 2**

*Selection of Immigration Acts in Japan that Have Been Amended and Translated in the Past Five Years*

|        | <b>Title of the Law</b>  | <b>Date of Submission</b> | <b>Word Count</b> |
|--------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Text 1 | Act No. 89 of 2016 Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees   | 03/31/2020                | 19059             |
| Text 2 | Amendment of Act No. 102 of 2018: Special Act on the Immigration Control of, Inter Alia, Those Who Have Lost Japanese Nationality Pursuant to the Treaty of Peace with Japan | 03/09/2021                | 6589              |
| Text 3 | Amendment of Act No. 63 of 2019: Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act   | 03/31/2020                | 51009             |

### Data Analyses

Descriptive analysis and qualitative research approach have been utilized in the present study.

## Results and Discussion

The present study has adopted the framework of Bhatia on analysis of lexicon and grammar in the legal language. The summary of the results is presented in Table 3 for each category. I will first discuss the details of each category. Then I will draw an initial description of lexical and grammatical features in the Japanese immigration law.

### Sentence Length

The average length of the sentences and the number of words in each text depict that the total number of words in each text varies—the mean of the length in sentence and words does not differ significantly. Text 3 has the most number of words; hence, it makes sense to have the most number of sentences. However, the average number of words (roughly 74 to 81 words) per sentence is similar, especially in text 2 and text 3. This is prevalent in the legal texts that the number of words per sentence is more, and legal texts usually carry lengthy and wordy sentences (Austin, 1984; Bhatia, 1993; Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; Hill & King, 2004). Although Bhatia (1993) stated that the average number of words per sentence in legal texts was 271 words, the present study depicts less than 80 words across the texts. This is a contradicting result; perhaps the data in the present study may be influenced by plain English movements, which will be discussed further in the later section.

### Nominal

Nominal phrases are the most prevalent feature in the Japanese immigration law. For examples:

- (1) National government agencies with jurisdiction over the administrative affairs relating to technical intern training within a region may organize a council made up of those agencies, local government agencies, and other relevant agencies. (hereinafter referred to as a “regional council” in this Article). (Article 56, Text 1)

The terms in the following items as used in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act and the orders pursuant to the Act are to have the meanings as are defined in each item. (Article 2, Text 3)

Nominal phrases indeed occur the most. Nominalization makes the sentence rather long and redundant, but this is to avoid ambiguity in the sentence. Nominal phrases were reflected in the form of the syntactic discontinuity.

### Prepositional Phrases

The use of prepositional phrases was prevalent across all three texts in the present study. The most frequently used prepositional phrase was *in accordance with* across all three texts. The second most frequent phrase was *for the purpose of*. The most prevalent preposition in the three texts was the use of *in*. This result resonates with the previous studies (Swales & Bhatia, 1983; Bhatia, 1993). In order to avoid ambiguity, instead of using simpler prepositions, legal texts utilize lengthy prepositional phrases just like the ones in the present study.

### Multinomial Phrases

Coulthard and Johnson (2007, 2010) stated that the use of *or* and *and* is interchangeable in legal texts. In other words, these two conjunctions function the same in legal texts. Here is one of the examples found in the corpus:

Pursuant to the provisions of Cabinet Order, the competent ministers may delegate, to the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, part of their authority over the collection of reports, the order to submit or present books and records, the order to appear, the questioning, or the on-site inspection under Article 35, paragraph (1) (limited to those conducted for the enforcement of the provisions of Article 40, paragraphs (3) through (5)) (hereinafter referred to as the “collection of reports, etc.” in the following paragraph and in the following Article). (Text 1, Article 104)

In this excerpt, underlined *or* can be replaced by *and*. When one wishes to “submit” a document, they need to physically present it; therefore, the use of *and*

is applicable in this case. Yet, *or* was used in the text. This exemplifies the use of *or* can be replaced with *and*. In the legal texts, it is generally assumed that *or* and *and* are used interchangeably.

In the present study, the result supports this statement; *or* seems to act as the original function of *or* and also other functions of *and*. However, an interesting observation in the present study is that *and* was intended mostly in the original function of *and*, and these two conjunctions occurred most frequently between nominal phrases.

### ***Syntactic Discontinuity***

The nominal, prepositional phrases and multinomial phrases identified were manually analyzed and drawn for the frequent counts. Syntactic discontinuity was evident in the present data. The most frequent form of discontinuity in syntax was verb discontinuity. Examples are as follows from text 2:

Article 10 (1) A special permanent resident who has been issued with a special permanent resident certificate which does not bear the place of residence must, within 14 days of settling on a place of residence, in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Ministry of Justice Order, *produce* the relevant special permanent resident certificate to the mayor of the municipality in which the place of residence is situated, and notify the place of residence to the Commissioner of the Immigration Services Agency, via the mayor of the municipality in which the place of residence is situated. (text 1)

Article 1 The purpose of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act is to provide for fair management over the entry and departure procedures of *all persons in Japan, the residence of foreign nationals in Japan*, as well as consolidate the recognition procedures of the refugee status. (text 3)

Verb discontinuities occurred with the pair of prepositional phrases in between, such as *in accordance with* and *for the purpose of*.

Noun discontinuities are also evident, albeit not as frequent as verb discontinuities. The following is one of the excerpts:

(2) *A person who, due to unavoidable reasons, foresees a difficulty in making the application within the renewal period in accordance with the provisions of the preceding paragraph may, in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Ministry of Justice Order, prior to the renewal period, apply to the Commissioner of the Immigration Services Agency, via the mayor of the municipality in which the place of residence is situated, to renew the period of validity of the special permanent resident certificate.*

Article 19 (2) If *an application* has been submitted by a foreign national who is a resident with a status of residence set forth in the left-hand column of the Appended Table I, in accordance with the procedures provided for by Ministry of Justice Order, *to engage in activities of managing business* involving income or activities for which they receive remuneration to the extent that there is no impediment to the original activities under the status of residence, the Commissioner of the Immigration Services Agency may grant permission if the Commissioner finds reasonable grounds to do so. In this case, the Commissioner of the Immigration Services Agency may impose conditions necessary for the permission.

Overall, noun discontinuities are the second most frequent form out of the three forms. Noun discontinuities were not as evident as verb discontinuities in the present study.

The result of the present study replicates almost all the features that were found in a previous study (Goheco, 2011a). Japanese immigration law in English can be said to have typical characteristics of the legal language that has been defined in the other literature (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; Swales & Bhatia, 1983; Crystal & Davy; 1969); however, the present study shows few occurrences of multinomial phrases. This is not congruent with the previous studies.

This research paper, therefore, sheds light on the new impetus in the legal language, which is the use of less complex words. Although the result shows that the Japanese immigration law possesses typical legal, linguistic features such as the use of lengthy



**Table 3***Summary of the Results*

|        | <b>Sentence length</b>                       | <b>Nominal</b>      | <b>Prepositional Phrases</b>   | <b>Multinomial Phrases (verbs)</b>   | <b>Syntactic Discontinuity</b>   |
|--------|--|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Text 1 | 182 sentences/<br>51.7 words<br>per sentence | 170 nominal phrases | 'for the purpose of' (10)<br>'in accordance with' (11)<br>'in whole or in part' (10)<br>'in relation to' (6) 'in light of' (3)<br>'on consideration of' (5)                            | 'submit or present' (11)   | 27 (15 Nominal discontinuities, 6 verb discontinuities, and 4 multinomial discontinuities) |
| Text 2 | 65 sentences/<br>73.7 words<br>per sentence  | 60 nominal phrases  | 'in accordance with' (32) 'for the purpose of' (6) 'in relation to' (1) 'on behalf of' (3)   | None   | 47 (45 verb discontinuities, 2 noun discontinuities)                                       |
| Text 3 | 569 sentences/<br>80.7 words<br>per sentence | 560 nominal phrases | 'in accordance with' (54) 'in addition to' (9) 'in conjunction with' (4) 'in consideration of' (3) 'in lieu of' (6) 'in relation to' (11) 'on behalf of' (3) 'for the purpose of' (41) | 'schemes or advocates' (4)<br>'forge(d) or alter(ed)' (10)<br>'flee(s) or fail(s)' (6) 'submit(ing) or presenting' (4) | 76 (30 noun discontinuities, 31 verb discontinuities, 15 multinomial discontinuities)      |

sentences and an excessive amount of nominal phrases and prepositional phrases, multinomial phrases were not as evident in the Japanese immigration acts, which resonate with the study of Gochecho's (2011a) lexico-grammatical analysis of the property acts in the Philippines English. As far as I am aware of, other than Gochecho's (2011a) finding on the legal language, there has been no study to support her finding on the lack of multinomial phrases in the legal texts. The present study, therefore, added new insights to the field of forensic linguistics that perhaps there is an impetus that recent legal languages may gear towards the use of plain English movement. Plain English movement in legal language has proliferated in the past decade whose intention is to delineate the legal language as understandable and comprehensible for lay members of the community (Bhatia, 2010 as cited in Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). One of the examples Bhatia (2010 as cited in Coulthard & Johnson, 2010) gave for plain English movement as the following:

#### *Original version*

"Registration of Clubs (Ireland) Act, 1904: If any excisable liquor is sold or supplied in a registered club for consumption outside the premises of the club, except as provided in section four, paragraph (h), every person supplying or selling such liquor, every

person who shall pay for such liquor and every person authorizing the sale or supply of such liquor shall be liable severally, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding for a first offence seven pounds, for a second offence fifteen pounds ... unless he proves to be satisfaction of the court that such liquor was so sold or supplied without his knowledge or against his consent, and, where it is proved that such liquor has been received, delivered, or distributed within the premises of the club and taken outside the premises, it shall, failing proof to the contrary, be deemed to have been so taken for consumption outside the premises"

(Bhatia, 2010, as cited in Coulthard & Johnson, 2010, p. 43-45)

#### *Plain English version*

"Registration of Clubs (Ireland) Act, 1904: It is unlawful to sell or buy excisable liquor for consumption outside a club and is punishable by fine to a maximum of thirty pounds"

(Bhatia, 2010, as cited in Coulthard & Johnson, 2010, p. 43-45)

These two excerpts exemplify contrastive use of the length of the sentence and technical words. One can notice that the first one includes all the details for the first, second, and third offenses, whereas the second one excludes such detailed information. It is no doubt

that the second example is much easier to comprehend for lay readers; however, a lack of details does not equal to one's comprehension and correct interpretation. This robust phenomenon of plain English movement perhaps explains the absence of multinominal phrases in the present study. Another interesting finding in the present study is that the use of verb discontinuities was evident. This is congruent to the other types of legal texts that manifest all-inclusiveness in the legal texts. The use of complex sentences is one of the characteristics of the language of the law; however, because many of the legal texts have been simplified, the English translation of Japanese law may take up this pattern.

Another possibility for this phenomenon can be explained by the intended audience of such legal texts. As mentioned earlier in regard to the importance of understanding the law in a country where one wishes to migrate, accessibility and readability of such translated laws are given more endowment than translating the actual and literal meaning of the complex law in Japanese. I cannot firmly attest to this yet as I has not compared the original texts in Japanese with the translated version in English. However, as a Japanese national and native speaker of Japanese, I can state that it is tantamount that the Japanese legal language is complex and difficult to understand, even for native speakers of Japanese. Perhaps, this stigma can also be bestowed by the concept of contrastive rhetoric proposed by Kaplan (1987), who established the notion that cultural differences influence the rhetorical pattern of writers. Thus, translators employed their semantic knowledge to translate the law in a way that is understandable to the majority of lay members of the community who would actually make use of such translated legal texts.

The linguistic patterns found in the present study are therefore crucial in the following summative. First, these patterns, consisting of simple sentences, show the current trend and influence of the plain English movement. Secondly, the translated Japanese law following these patterns indicates that it is easy to understand and help Japanese lawyers whose English proficiency is not advanced. It will also be able to help foreign nationals who are lay people that would like to understand the Japanese immigration law because the results of the present study indicate the readability of the translated Japanese laws. Also, this study will aid ESL/EFL teachers who teach students

in the department of law, as Kraft (2019) called for more research on teaching the legal language to ESL/EFL students. The dearth of research is salient in applied linguistics. The results of the study can also be authentic supplements and welcome any teachers and researchers to utilize the result.

The scope of the present study is obviously a limitation of the data, which is the recent immigration law. Various genres of the law (i.e., human rights, criminal) may be construed differently. One interesting study to include here is Ufot's (2013) study, which took a unique approach to analyze the lexico-grammar of the legal language while comparing it with stylistics and English for specific purposes (ESP). He advocated that the legal texts he obtained display similar linguistic repertoires to ESP-related vocabulary. Future research in this field should have a larger number of texts so that they can be generalized and compared with the features of the legal language in English in other contexts. Candlin et al. (2002) also called for more research-based legal texts that accommodate non-native speakers of English. People who will make use of the translated versions of the law in various countries will most likely be non-native speakers of English (or vice versa). Defining the special characteristics of the legal will be useful not only for legal language teaching but also for students of the law and lay members of the community who wish to understand certain legal policies (Candlin et al., 2002). Keeping that notion in mind, it is crucial to elucidate the features of the legal language in various contexts. Additionally, it will be interesting to investigate the frequency of modal verbs and the use of passive voice in the English version of Japanese law to compare and contrast with other literature (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007; Chovanec, 2013; Gocheco, 2011b; Wiredu, 2016).

On a final note, my personal interest in the accuracy of the translation in Japanese law should be highlighted and investigated in the near future. It will be intriguing to compare the original text of the law in Japanese with the translation of the text in English. Numerous studies have indicated the challenges that translators face in the context of legal texts in terms of not only linguistic dimensions but also cultural-specific and style-related aspects that may arise (Ali, 2016; Amini & Lotfollahi, 2019). I would like to see the accuracy of the translation in Japanese law as well as the comprehensibility of the text.

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## Declaration of Possible Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Appendix

### **Appendix A: Excerpt of Special Act on the Immigration Control of, inter alia, those who have lost Japanese Nationality pursuant to the Treaty of Peace with Japan**

#### **(Purpose)**

Article 1 The purpose of this Act is to specify special measures relating to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Cabinet Order No. 319 of 1951; hereinafter referred to as the “Immigration Control Act”) regarding persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan, and child of persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan, as defined in the Article below,.

#### **(Definitions)**

Article 2 (1) In this Act, “Persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan” means those who have lost their Japanese nationality in accordance with the provisions of the same treaty, on the date on which the treaty first took effect, and to whom either of the following items applies:

- (i) the person is one who has been residing in Japan continuously since September 2, 1945 or earlier.
- (ii) the person is one who was born in Japan in the period from September 3, 1945 to the date on which the peace treaty first took effect; who has continued to reside in Japan since then; and whose biological father or mother has resided in Japan continuously since September 2, 1945 or earlier, until the relevant time of birth (if the father or mother was deceased at the time of birth, at the relevant time of death) and satisfies either of (a) or (b) below:
  - (a) has lost Japanese nationality in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Peace with Japan, on the date on which the peace treaty first took effect;
  - (b) has died by the date on which the peace treaty first took effect or lost Japanese nationality after birth by the date on which the peace treaty took effect; and but for such death or loss, would have been deemed to have lost Japanese nationality pursuant to the provisions of the Treaty of Peace with Japan on the date on which the peace treaty took effect.

(2) In this Act, “child of persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan” means those persons: who were born in Japan as lineal descendants of persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan; who continue to reside in Japan since birth; and to whom either of the following items applies:

- (i) the person is the child of a person who has lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan.
- (ii) excluding where the preceding item applies, the person belongs to a generation of the family of the relevant person residing in Japan, up to the grandchildren of the relevant person who lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan (where the relevant person residing in Japan is a grandchild of the relevant person who has lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan, the relevant grandchild; hereinafter the same in this item), and that person’s father or mother: was born in Japan as a lineal descendant of persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan; and has since then continued to reside in Japan until the birth of the person from the relevant generation (if deceased at the time of birth, at the relevant time of death).

**(Statutory Special Permanent Resident)**

Article 3 A Person who has lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan or who is the child of a person who has lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan may, if that person satisfies at least one of the following items, permanently reside in Japan as a special permanent resident provided for in this Act.

- (i) the person satisfies any one of the following.
  - (a) the person is one who stays in Japan pursuant to the provisions of Article 2, paragraph (6) of the Act on Measures for Ministry of Foreign Affairs Order Issued pursuant to Imperial Ordinance on Orders Issued Incidental to Acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration (Act No. 126 of 1952) (herein after referred to as the “Old Act No. 126 of 1952”) prior to its revision by the provisions of Article 10 of the supplementary provisions.
  - (b) the person is one who was granted permission for permanent residence in accordance with the provisions of the Special Act on the Control of Immigration following the Implementation of the Treaty between Japan and the Republic of Korea concerning the Legal Standing and Treatment of Korean Nationals residing in Japan (Act No. 146 of 1965) (hereinafter referred to as the “Old Japan-Korea Special Act”) prior to its repeal by the provisions of Article 6 of the supplementary provisions.
  - (c) the person is one who stays in Japan by virtue of the status of permanent residence as set out in the left-hand column of the Appended Table II of the Immigration Control Act prior to its revision by the provisions of Article 7 of the supplementary provisions (hereinafter referred to as the “Old Immigration Control Act”).
- (ii) the person is one who stays in Japan by virtue of the status of residence of a child of persons who have lost Japanese nationality under the Treaty of Peace with Japan, as set out in the left-hand column of the Appended Table II of the Old Immigration Control Act.