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LEGISLATION TRANSLATION IN CHINA:

IS HORIZONTAL EQUIVALENCE PRINCIPLE

UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE?

ABSTRACT

Legislation translation in China has for a long time been suffering from the failure of not being able to effectively represent legislative meanings of source texts. Horizontal equivalence requirement to legislation translation, adopted as a major guiding rule by most law translators, is blamed to have caused the problem of linguistic ambiguity in law translation. In attempting to dig into the causes for the linguistic ambiguity resulting from wide application of horizontal equivalence principle, analogous approach is employed in this paper to compare legislative environments in some bilingual jurisdictions. Literal copy of syntactic structures from source language, ineffective reproduction of technical terminology, and lack of adequate quality control mechanism in China are among the causes that attribute to the linguistic ambiguity in legislation translation. A combination of horizontal equivalence principle with vertical equivalence principle is proved to be effective in compensating the deficiencies in legislation translation in China.