Some Aspects of the Syntax of the Arabic Legislative Sentence

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Abstract: *The analysis of the internal structure of the Arabic legislative sentence is of immediate relevance to several interrelated disciplines including discourse analysis, contrastive linguistics and translation pedagogy. Nonetheless, little, if any, systematic corpus-based research has been conducted to verify the largely impressionistic and intuitive claims made about the syntax of this sentence type. This paper provides a statistical analysis of the syntax of this sentence type in three legislative texts: the Iraqi Companies Law, the Emirati Labor Law and the Jordanian Penal Code. The results show that passivization is a common feature, that the number of words in the Arabic sentence is less than half of its counterpart in English, that complex sentences are more frequent than other types of sentences and that case descriptions are less frequent than syntactic discontinuities. The research findings are significant to both translators and translator trainers as they identify the most salient features of Arabic legislative text and place such features at the disposal of these practitioners for the purposes of teaching and learning. However, despite the revealing conclusions, more research needs to be carried out on larger corpora not only in this sub-genre but also in other areas of legal Arabic.*

Keywords: case descriptions, discourse analysis, legislative texts, syntactic discontinuities, syntactic features

1. Introduction

The field of discourse analysis has long been considered a major contributor to translation studies. Its significance has been recognized both in the area of translation pedagogy and in the theoretical exploration of translation-related issues. A cursory investigation of practices in the field of translation would reveal that trainers view text analysis at the lexical, syntactic and stylistic levels as an essential tool (Emery 1991). This is expressed by Nord (2005:1) who states that:

> Most writers on translation theory agree that before embarking upon any translation, the translator should analyze the text comprehensively, since this appears to be the only way of ensuring that the source text (ST) has been wholly and correctly understood.

The same position is reechoed in Schäffner (2002:3): "(T)here is a general agreement that understanding a text is a pre-requisite for translating it", adding that "understanding (the source text) includes reflecting on the linguistic structures which a text displays". Furthermore, a translation-oriented text-typology has played a central role in informing the research of many other theorists in the field of translation studies; among these we may mention Reiß (1971/ 2000), Newmark (1988), Hatim and Mason (1993), Trosborg (1997), Schäffner (2002) and Nord (2005).

Of immediate relevance to this paper is the position advocated by several researchers and aptly summarized by Christian Nord (2005:17); namely that the

communicative function of a given text will usually be characterized by "a combination or 'configuration' of features", "which can be constituted by both extratextual (i.e pragmatic) and intratextual (semantic, syntactic and stylistic) elements" (Branco 2014:55). Reiß and Vermeer (1984), further, emphasize that by "assigning a text to (a texts type), the translator can decide on a hierarchy of equivalence postulate which has to be observed in TT production" (qtd. in Nord 2005:22-23). Generally, the consensus is that text analysis and text typology can converge to help the translator identify the translation problems (s)he is likely to encounter, select a strategy and a methodology appropriate to the text at hand, establish some sort of correlation between the text type and its grammatical realization, and, finally, identify the purpose of the author and the communicative function the text is intended to serve in its own culture (Puchala 2011:357). This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts in text analysis and typology by examining some syntactic features of the sentence in a specific sub-variety, the Arabic legislative texts. Such texts are normative and regulatory in nature and have a prescriptive function; they "impose obligations and confer rights" and powers on the parties concerned (Bhatia 1982:3). Among the texts that fall within this category are "laws and regulations, codes, treaties and conventions" (Tiersma and Solan 2012:189). They are impersonal and decontextualized as the originator and the reader are not stated in the text (Bhatia 1993). The major features which will be examined in this paper are passivization, sentence length, sentence types, case descriptions and syntactic discontinuities.

2. Purpose of the study
This study aims to examine certain aspects of the internal structure of the sentence in Arabic legislative texts by analyzing three major legislative texts taken from three different countries. The objective of the analysis is to identify the most salient syntactic features and determine to what extent they are shared across the three texts (our corpus). The findings of the paper can be of benefit to translators and their trainers as well as to theoretical researchers and discourse analysts. Where appropriate, reference will be made to the relevant syntactic features in legal English in order to highlight similar and divergent areas.

3. Scope and limitations of the study
This paper discusses the syntactic features of the Arabic legislative text. It focuses on four specific features; passivization, sentence types, length of sentence, case descriptions and syntactic discontinuities. The study is based on three major legislative documents in Arabic: قانون العمل الإماراتي (Emirati Labor Law), قانون الشركات العراقي (Iraqi Companies Law) and a representative portion of قانون العقوبات الأردني (Jordanian Penal Code). All these documents are available online and may be conveniently accessed by researchers. Due to their sheer size, however, it is impracticable to include them either in the main body of the text or as appendices. The paper, moreover, limits itself to legislative texts in Arabic. The examples examined in it are drawn from the three said legislative documents only. However, these documents share similar characteristics with other legislative

texts. Future researchers may explore other syntactic aspects which have not been examined in this study such as nominalization, cohesion, ellipsis, prepositional phrases and reference. They may, alternatively, examine other types of legal texts in Arabic.

4. Primary research questions
The study is an attempt to provide answers to the following questions:
1. How frequent is the use of passive in the Arabic legislative text?
2. How long is the Arabic legislative sentence and what are its common types?
3. How frequent are case descriptions in these texts and what are their syntax and meanings?
4. What is the status of syntactic discontinuities in Arabic legislative texts and what are their grammatical patterns, locations and functions?
5. What implications do these features (and their frequencies) have to translators, translation pedagogy and text analysis?

The language of legislative texts in Arabic has not been examined thoroughly or systematically despite its relative importance to the fields of discourse analysis and translation pedagogy. In fact, most of the work encountered in this connection is predominantly impressionistic, intuitive and unsubstantiated. This paper will provide quantitative and qualitative analysis of three legislative documents in order to provide a valid and corpus-based account of Arabic legislative writing that will help text linguists, translators and trainers.

5. Literature review
Perhaps two of the most sweeping generalizations ever made about legal texts in Arabic were attributed to Hatim who, in a lecture given at The Centre of Translation at Leeds University in March, 2008, stated that Arabic "does not have its legal register". A year later, another bold claim was also made by Hatim, namely that "there is no well-defined legal discourse in Arabic" (El-Farahaty 2015:31). Emery (1989:10), by contrast, emphasizes that legal Arabic does indeed exhibit certain characteristics, a stance similar to that taken by Fakhouri (2008:25):

> Arabic legal texts exhibit their own features of structure and style. They make more use of grammatical cohesion (through reference and conjunction) and of finite structures than their English counterparts, and less of morphology. The two languages differ in their patterns of nominalisation, creation of Binomials and in their use of highlighting and text markers.

The major problem with both positions is that neither of them has provided quantitative support or identified any specific research or evidence-based analyses that would validate their claims. Secondly, the various sub-genres of legal writing - legislative writing, academic writing and juridical writing (Bhatia 1983:2) - are likely to be characterized by different bundles of features that may be peculiar to the sub-genre in question.

The analysis of legal Arabic, however, was not restricted to making general statements on the genre itself. More specific issues were also tackled by a handful of researchers. Fakhouri (2008), for example, discussed the lexical features (doublets, binomials and descriptive epithets), discourse-level features (cohesion and coherence) and the syntactic features (nominalization, verb groups, conditionals, passives and modality) in Arabic legal texts. Zidan (2015) provided a comprehensive, yet highly superficial and poorly-documented, description of several aspects of legal Arabic texts. "Arabic legal texts," they claim "are usually crammed with conditionals, stipulative terms, obligations or rights. The most common condition particle is إذا 'if'" (74). Moreover, "there is a general tendency to minimize passive constructions in legal Arabic language" (73). Bouras and Zouari (2014) repeat almost verbatim the categories, the claims and the examples given in Fakhouri with the exception of the discussion of the status of passives in Arabic legal texts. Another study that deals with legal writing is El-Farahaty (2015:42) who discusses, in very broad terms, the features of legal Arabic. Commenting on the syntax of the Arabic legal sentence, she claims that "although it is a common feature of Arabic to favor coordination through the conjunction و (and), legal Arabic displays complexity by using coordinated clauses and embedded and relative clauses initiated by one of the relative pronouns الذي ، التي (who, whom, which, that)". Elsewhere, El- Farahaty (2015:43) refers to what she terms "official documents" such as marriage and divorce documents; these, she states, tend to use short and occasionally fragmented sentences or even templates. In discussing the role of the passive structure in legal writing, El-Farahay reiterates a view held by numerous linguists to the effect that Arabic, in general, favors active verbs, but she concedes that the use of passive forms is gradually becoming more evident, though its use is still "basic and inconsistent" (41). She further accepts that, for such a claim to be substantiated, "we need further studies using corpus-based tools" (41). The two most salient conclusions made by El-Farahaty are one, that there is variation in the complexity of the legal sentence, depending on text sub-type and, two, that further quantitative and qualitative analyses are needed in order to enable researchers to make sound(er) statements or generalizations in that regard. And this is the task this paper intends to undertake.

The above works are all in English. Serious academic publications in Arabic on the subject, by comparison, are extremely rare. As a matter of fact, the only paper encountered was one written by Al-9uyoony (العيوني) (1434Hijri). It attempts to lay down the linguistic constraints the author believes should be observed in legal drafting. Otherwise, the paper fails to offer any documentation or support for the claims it makes regarding the characteristics of legal writing which the author sums up as follows:

    a. The legal sentence is very long and grammatically complex due to its dependence on processes such as embedding and subordination;

    b. The excessive use of restrictive qualifications;

   c. The distance between the various constituents of the sentence such as the verb and its subject, the qualified noun and the adjective that qualifies it, the subject and its nominal predicate, etc.; and

   d. The excessive number of details crammed in the sentence, which makes its comprehension difficult (13).

Other Arabic research on the subject of legal writing is highly fragmentary and less reliable. It includes online publications and books written for professional translators. Examples include Al-Muumen المؤمن (no date), Faissal (فيصل) (no date), Al Fiqi (الفقي) (no date) and Sabra (صبرة) (2007a, 2007b and 2008). By and large, these sites and books borrow their terminology from English and almost unanimously reiterate claims made by Al-9uyoony in the preceding paragraph.

6. Data collection and methodology

This paper combines the quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis of legislative texts in Arabic. It aims to look into certain syntactic features in Arabic legislative writing by describing these features and quantifying their occurrence in this particular sub-genre. A general description of each feature will be given, its frequency will be calculated and then the significance of the relevant statistics will be discussed. The texts in the corpus are considered adequately representative of Arabic legislative documents written in different countries and are quantitatively sufficient to fairly reflect the predominant syntactic features of legislative writing in Arabic; the three documents cover 130 pages comprising 1185 sentences.

A caveat may be in order, though. Linguistically speaking, the sentence is the basic, largest and most relevant unit in grammatical analysis (Allerton 1969; Halliday and Hasan 1976). Orthographically, the sentence is marked by appropriate punctuation marks. However, the punctuation system in Arabic is used in a highly erratic, variable and idiosyncratic way. It is not always a reliable means for determining sentence boundaries (Meiseles 1979; Ditters 1991; Stetkevych 2006). Whereas English employs punctuation systematically in writing, Ghazala (2004:230) notes that Arabic writers use punctuation "poorly and haphazardly, by way of decoration," or disregard it completely. This view is endorsed by Holes (2004) who states that the "usage of periods and commas can be highly variable and idiosyncratic", adding that:

> This does not in fact matter: whether punctuation is used or not, it functions alongside the native system of textual chunking, which relies on coordinating and subordinating conjunctions that perform the dual role of signaling formally the beginnings and endings of sense groups and indicating the nature of the logical or functional relationships between them (p. 51).

This fact is quite evident in many legislative texts in Arabic: sentence boundaries are not consistently or clearly marked in the text. Particularly, full stops are either ignored or replaced by commas while commas do not seem to follow any identifiable pattern of usage. As a result, the analyst would occasionally need to re-punctuate the text in order to provide accurate qualitative and quantitative analyses of the texts under consideration. However, the authors'

efforts in this regard were aided by the fact that the sentences in the texts analyzed were less problematic as complete units of thought and grammatical entities are clearly divided regardless of the punctuation used.

The following two examples from the Iraqi Companies Law demonstrate the problem of using punctuation in Arabic. The stars indicate that there should be a full stop instead of a comma as the idea is complete and new information is given after the comma:

- (يعد المؤسسون عقدا للشركة موقع من قبلهم او من قبل ممثليهم القانونيين،* يجب ان يتضمن العقد كحد ادنى: ....)
- (وعلى وزير التجارة البت في هذا الاعتراض خلال 30 ثلاثين يوما من تاريخ تقديمه،* فاذا رفض الوزير طلب مؤسس الشركة يحق لمقدم طلب تاسيس الشركة الطعن في قرار الوزير امام محكمة مختصة خلال 30 ثلاثين يوما.)

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7. Results
In this part, the features of passivization, sentence forms and length, case descriptions and syntactic discontinuities will be examined in detail. A statistical analysis is carried out for each feature in order to make evidence-based generalizations about the syntactic aspects investigated in the study.

7.1. Passivization
Passivization is commonly used in legal texts for the purpose of obscuring the agent and is "more common in one legal subtype than the other" (El-Farahaty 2015:24). Passive voice is used "when the implied subject is too obvious to need stating", and/or to keep "the stress on the action, rule or decision rather than on the personality of the doer" (Alcaraz & Hughes 2014:20). This applies to legal English where the passive voice is used abundantly especially in legislative texts. Shinichiro (2009:70) found that the frequency of passive in legal English is 36.88%. Williams (2013:12) also compared the percentages of passive in UK legislative texts between 1980 and 2010; he found that that the use of passive declined from 53.1 percent in 1980 to 26.0 percent in 2010. In the corpus analyzed by Bulatović (2013), this figure stood at 35 percent. The analysis of the use of passive verbs in our corpus is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The frequency of passivization

The document	Total no. of verbs	No. of active verbs	No. of passive verbs	Passive percentage
Iraqi Companies Law	1143	869	274	23.9%
Emirati Labor Law	1021	845	176	17.2%
Jordanian Penal Code	877	618	259	29.5%
Mean				23.5%

As can be noticed from the table, the highest percentage of passive is in the Jordanian Penal Code where passive verbs form close to one third of the total number of verbs used in the text. In the Iraqi Companies Law, this percentage falls to around one quarter of the total verbs, compared to 17 per cent in the Emirati Labor Law. The last figure is remarkably smaller than that encountered in the Jordanian Penal Code, but the percentages remain fairly high for the three documents.

7.2. Sentence length

Legal sentences in English are notoriously known for their length (i.e the number of words which is usually in excess of 55) and complexity (i.e. the predominance of subordination in the structure and the abundance of complex sentences in comparison to compound and simple ones). But discourse analysts are also aware of the fact that such characteristics are an expression of the interplay between the communicative function of the text and the grammatical forms it employs. According to Bhatia (1994), the legal sentence needs to be not just a statement of, say, a given provision but also an expression of the qualifications, i.e. conditions, contingencies and restrictions under which that provision will operate. Moreover, the language of the provision must be precise, unambiguous and universally applicable. This cognitive structure coupled with the "excessive information load" will necessarily require grammatical patterns that go beyond the basic clause elements to incorporate complex noun phrases, coordination, embedding, syntactic discontinuities, complex prepositional phrases, including initial case descriptions, embedding and subordination (Bhatia 1997:208. See also Swales and Bhatia 1983).This aspect is also reflected in the number of words found in the legislative sentence though variations abound. For example, one sentence in the Electronic Communications Act (2000) ran up to 380 words, but this figure can fall down to around 37 words in certain recent legal publications in English. (For more details of this aspect in English, see Gustaffson 1975; Kurzon 1997; Hiltunin 2001; Gotti 2008; Tiersma and Solan 2012). No comparable corpus-based analysis has been carried out in Arabic thus far, but the analysis conducted on the three texts under study shows the results presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Average number of words in a sentence

The document	Number of pages	Total no. of words	No. of sentences	Average number of words in a sentence
Iraqi Companies Law	56	11592	536	21.6
Emirati Labor Law	47	9026	379	23.8
Jordanian Penal Code	27	6493	270	24.0

| Totals | 130 | 27111 | 1185 | **23.1** |

The number of words was counted orthographically by the word counter in the Microsoft Word Program. The words in titles, phrases and clauses were not counted as the main focus of this section is the sentence. Some sentences were divided into two sentences and counted as two because they include two full separate ideas. The average number of words in a sentence was calculated according to the following formula: the average number of words in a sentence = the total number of words divided by the total number of sentences.

The results of our analysis show two things; firstly, the number of words in the Arabic legislative sentence is much smaller than its English counterpart. Secondly, the numbers in the three documents are extremely close: 21.6, 23.8 and 24.0, with the average being 23.1 words for the three texts. Furthermore, the percentage of sentences containing 20 words or less is (48.3%) in the Emirati Labor Law, (53.7) in the Iraqi Companies Law and (52.2%) in the Jordanian Penal Code. The percentages of sentences containing 50 words or more are 4%, 3% and 7%, respectively.

7.3. Sentence types

Before we move to the next section, it may be appropriate to provide a brief description of the basic sentence structure and sentence types in the Arabic language.

According to Holes (2004), a sentence in written Arabic consists of a subject and a predicate. The subject (= S) may be freestanding, that is, a noun/independent pronoun; or dependent, that is, consisting of one or more bound morphemes that form part of the verb (=V) (if there is one) and that indicate the person, number and gender of the subject. The predicate may or may not be freestanding. The verb may or may not have a complement (=COMP). In the structurally simplest type of verbal sentence, the most syntactically frequent order is VSCOMP. In the verbless sentence, it is SCOMP (251).

Sentences in Arabic fall into two categories: nominal and verbal. When unmarked, the latter begins with the verb and is followed by the subject. These two basic patterns combine in order to produce three more types of sentence:

a. the compound (or coordinated) sentence which comprises two or more clauses conjoined by a conjunctive particle (such as *wa, fa* and *aw*).

b. the complex sentence which contains in addition to the main clause "nominal, adjectival (or relative), adverbial and conditional (clauses)" (Holes 2004:278). The nominal clause is introduced by the complementizers *?an, ?anna* or *?inna*. Adjectival clauses are introduced by a. relative pronoun (e.g. *?allathi, ?allati, ?allathiina*, etc.) while adverbial clauses use conjunctive particles including *lammaa* and *Hattaa*. The last type, conditional clauses, typically starts with the word *?ithaa*.

c. the compound-complex sentence which combines the process of coordination along with elements typical of complex sentences such as nominal and adjectival clauses (Holes 2004).

As for the nature of the sentence in legislative texts, Table 3 presents the number and the percentage of each sentence type in the three documents followed by the averages.

Table 3: Frequency of sentence forms

The document	Simple sentence		Compound sentence		Complex sentence		Compound-complex sentence	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Iraqi Companies Law	178	33.2	32	6%	266	46.6	60	11.2
Emirati Labor Law	83	21.9	23	6.1	210	55.4	63	16.6
Jordanian Penal Code	31	11.5	3	1.1	220	81.5	16	5.9
Average	97.7	22.2	19.3	4.3	232	61.2	46.3	11.2

In all the documents, the highest percentage of sentences is the complex, followed by the simple sentence. Compound-complex sentences occupy the third place, with the smallest percentage being the compound sentence type. The averages also show the same order of percentages. This means that the most prevalent sentence type in Arabic legislative writing is the complex sentence (61.2%) which is also common in Legal English. The percentage of simple sentences (22.2%) is far lower than complex sentences (61.2%), but is still higher than the compound-complex (11.2) and the compound sentences (4.3%).

In the Iraqi Companies Law, the percentage of simple and complex sentences predominates at around 80%. The other two sentence types form 20%, with the percentage of compound-complex sentences being double of that of the compound sentences. The Emirati Labor Law shows a very similar sentence type distribution. In the Jordanian Penal Code, however, most of the sentences are complex (81.5%), around one quarter of the sentences is simple and around 6% of the sentences is compound-complex. Few belong to the compound sentence type.

7.4. Case descriptions

According to Bhathia (1993) and Tessuto (2008), case descriptions (or descriptors) are initial adverbial elements which specify the contingencies, conditions and circumstances under which a given provision or rule applies. Their range of application involves the entire provision.

Table 4 represents the frequency of case descriptions, the percentages of the sentences starting with these case descriptions and their average in the corpus. We should note, in this context, that four sentences in our corpus contained more than one case description in a sentence. For example:

بعد استيفاء الدائنين حقوقهم وبعد تنزيل المبالغ اللازمة لوفاء ديون غير حالة او متنازع فيها، وبعد رد المصروفات او القروض التي يكون احد الشركاء قد قام بها في مصلحة الشركة، يقسم الباقي من اموال الشركة بين الشركاء جميعا.

Table 4: The frequency of case descriptions

Component Documents	Case descriptions	No. of sentences	% of sentences with case description
Iraqi Companies Law	61	536	11.4
Emirati Labor Law	24	379	6.3
Jordanian Penal Code	15	270	5.6
			Average 7.8

As shown in Table 4 above, the Iraqi Companies Law has approximately twice as many case descriptions compared to the Emirati Labor Law and the Jordanian Penal Code. The average of the sentences starting with case descriptions in the documents is 7.8%. From a syntactic perspective, case descriptions fall into several categories. Table 5 summarizes these categories and gives their percentages in the corpus.

Table 5: The syntax of case descriptions

Phrases / Documents	Prepositional phrase		Verb phrase		Conditional phrase		Adverbial Phrase	
	No. of occurrences	% of total sentences	No. of occurrences	% of total sentences	No. of occurrences	% of total sentences	No. of occurrences	% total of sentences
Iraqi Companies Law	49	9.1%	3	0.6%	1	0.2%	8	1.5%
Emirati Labor Law	22	5.8%	2	0.5%	0	0	0	0
Jordanian Penal Code	13	4.8%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%	0	0
Average % of Sentence	6.6%		0.5%		0,2%		0.5%	
Examples	وبصفة عامة، لن تمنع القرارات.. فيما عدا الشركات المساهمة، تصدر شهادة..		استثناءً من أحكام البند اولا من هذه المادة، يجوز ... وعلاوةً على ذلك، لا يطلب...		أما حسابات الشركة الخاصة، فتخضع .. أما في الجنحة غير المقصودة، فلا يجوز..		عند تأسيس شركة مساهمة خاصة، يساهم مؤسسو.... بعد اتخاذ قرار التخفيض، تتخذ الاجراءات	

The tables above show that the prepositional phrase is prevalent in the initial position in the three documents. The Iraqi Companies Law has the greatest percentage of sentences starting with this type of phrase (9%) compared to other two documents (Emirati Labor Law around 6% and Jordanian Penal Code around 5%). There are 8 instances of adverbial phrases in the Iraqi Companies Law, while no instance was found in the other two documents. Case descriptions in the documents can be classified according to their meanings as shown in the table 6 below. Illustrative examples are given for each meaning.

Table 6: Meanings of case descriptions

Meanings	Examples
To generalize	وبصفة عامة، ايأً كان قرار المحكمة، وفي كلتا الحالتين ، وفي كل الاحوال
To specify (situation, time, location, condition, purpose)	وبوجه خاص، في حالة طلب تاسيس، عند تاسيس، استثناء من احكام، ويستثنى من، بعد اتخاذ قرار، اما حسابات الشركة، وعند عدم موافقتهم، مع مراعاة احكام، يشترط لجواز الدمج، تتخذ لغرض الدمج، خلال 90 يوما من نفاذ هذا القانون، كما يوضح في اللوائح، في تطبيق هذا القانون، مع عدم الاخلال باحكام، ايفاء للغايات، اما في الجنحة،
To make exception	فيما عدا الشركات المساهمة
To add	علاوة على ذلك

7.5. Syntactic discontinuities: Forms and functions

A syntactic discontinuity (or parenthetical structure) is any independent grammatical unit (a word, phrase or clause) that separates the flow of syntax in the sentence (Crystal 2008:147). It is a qualification insertion in legislative texts which adds details such as "conditions, specifications, exceptions, circumstances and restrictions" (Jarad and Abu-Ssaydeh 2016:10). "{M}most legislative provisions," says Bhatia (2014:111), "are extremely rich in qualification insertions within their syntactic boundaries" and "without qualification, the provision would be too general and of universal application" (1993, cited in Frade 2004:57).

Table 7 shows the frequency of syntactic discontinuities in our three-text corpus. It should be noted that we also encountered eleven sentences with more than one syntactic discontinuity. These syntactic discontinuities occur either consecutively or, more frequently, are split by the main sentence. (For more examples, see Table 9).

Table 7: The frequency of syntactic discontinuities

Components Documents	Syntactic discontinuities	No. of sentences	% of sentences with syntactic discontinuity
Iraqi Companies Law	45	536	8.4%
Emirati Labor Law	96	379	25.3%
Jordanian Penal Code	44	270	16.3 %
			AVG:16.6 %

As shown in Table 7 above, the Emirati Labor Law has around twice as many syntactic discontinuities, compared to the Jordanian Penal Code and more than three times as many compared to the Iraqi Companies Law. The average percentage of the sentences containing syntactic discontinuities in the corpus is around 17%.

Syntactically, this category is represented by phrases of diverse kinds as the following table shows:

Table 8: The Syntax of syntactic discontinuities

Phrase Documents	Prepositional Phrase		Verb Phrase		Conditional Phrase		Adverbial Phrase		Noun Phrase	
	No. of occurrences	% of sentences	No. of occurrences	% of sentences	No. of occurrences	% of sentences	No. of occurrences	% of sentences	No. of occurrences	%of sentences
Iraqi Companies Law	28	5.2%	3	0.6%	1	0.2%	12	2.2%	0	0%
Emirati Labor Law	60	15.8%	8	2.1%	2	0.5%	25	6.6%	2	0.5%
Jordanian Penal Code	20	7.4%	7	2.6%	2	0.7%	9	3.3%	6	2.2%
Average % of Sentence	9.5%		1.8%		0.5%		4.0%		0.9%	
Examples	وتستثنى من هذه النسبة شركات التامين واعادة التامين... على البائع ابلاغ المساهمين الاخرين، بواسطة المدير المفوض، برغبته في بيع اسهمه....		على الشركة، ايا كان قرار المحكمة، ايداع صورة منه... يحدد بمرسوم اتحادي بناء على اقتراح وزير العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية وموافقة مجلس الوزراء الحد الادنى للاجور...		يتقاضى العامل اجره الاساسي مضافا اليه بدل السكن ان وجد عن ايام الاجازة... تبقى الهيئة العامة للشركة قائمة خلال مدة التصفية، ويعتبر		يتولى مؤسس شركة محدودة المسؤولية، عندما لا يكون للشركة مؤسسين اخرين، او مؤسس المشروع الفردي اعداد... على المؤسسين، خلال 30 ثلاثين يوما من انتهاء		لا يجوز لوسيط...ان يقبل من اي عامل سواء كان ذلك قبل قبوله في العمل او بعده أية عمولة ... وعلى الوزارات كل فيما	

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			مجلس ادارتها ان وجد منحلا.	مدة الاعتراض على الاكتتاب او رده، تزويد المسجل...	يخصه تنفيذ احكامه.

As in case descriptions, the prepositional phrase is the most frequent phrase occurring as a syntactic discontinuity in the corpus. The average percentage of sentences containing such a segment is around 9.5% in the three documents, with a percentage of 16% in the Emirati Labor Law, 7% in the Jordanian Penal Code and 5% in the Iraqi Companies Law. The second most frequent type of phrase is the adverbial, with an average of 4%. The Emirati Labor Law has 6.6% of its sentences containing Adverbial Phrases as syntactic discontinuities.

Based on the explanation of the Arabic sentence structure above, a syntactic discontinuity may occur between the verb and the subject, between the subject and the complement or within the complement in case of the verbal sentence. In this section, the passive verb was treated as the active verb and the "deputy doer" "نائب فاعل" Na?ib Fa?el was considered as subject. Thus, in the nominal sentence, a syntactic discontinuity may be placed between the subject and the predicate or within the predicate. In case the nominal sentence includes *inna wa axawatuha* or *kanaa wa axawatuha*, the syntactic discontinuity has one more location than the nominal sentence which is between the particle (*kanaa* or *inna*) and the subject. In case the sentence includes a conditional, the syntactic discontinuity may occur between the conditional clause proper (*jumlatu-shart* جملة الشرط) and the result clause (*jawabu-shart* جواب الشرط) or within one of them. Table 9 summarizes the different locations of syntactic discontinuities and examples for each location.

Table 9: The locations of the syntactic discontinuities

Location	Frequency	Example
Verbal sentence		
Between the verb and the subject	52	وتستثنى من هذه النسبة شركات التامين واعادة التامين الحكومية ... يجوز لمجلس ادارة الشركة، بعد تاسيس الشركة، في حالة عدم الاكتتاب ببعض اسهمها، ان يسلك احد طريقين ...
Between the subject and the complement	39	يتولى مؤسس شركة محدودة المسؤولية، عندما لا يكون للشركة مؤسسين اخرين، او مؤسس المشروع الفردي اعداد بيان ... يعطى المكتتب باسهم الشركة المساهمة، بعد تسديده الاقساط المستحقة وابراز الوصولات المثبتة لذلك، شهادة مؤقتة ..
Within the subject nominal clause	11	لا يجوز لصاحب العمل ان ينقل عاملا بالاجر الشهري بغير رضاء كتابي منه الى سلك عمال ... يجب على صاحب العمل ان يضع على الابواب الرئيسية التي يستعملها العمال في الدخول وكذلك في مكان ظاهر بمحل العمل جدولا ببيان يوم الغلق الاسبوعي...
Within the complement	13	تسري أحكام هذا القانون -على كل أردني فاعلاً كان أو شريكاً محرضاً أو متدخلاً ارتكب ...

		يلتزم صاحب العمل بأن يقدم الى دائرة العمل المختصة ضمانا مصرفيا...
Nominal sentence		
Between the subject and the predicate	16	على المؤسسين، خلال 30 ثلاثين يوما من انتهاء مدة الاعتراض على الاكتتاب او رده. تزويد المسجل بجميع... على الشركة، ايا كان قرار المحكمة، ايداع صورة ....
Within the subject nominal clause	14	لوزير العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية ان يستثني بقرار منه المؤسسات الخيرية والتربوية ... على صاحب العمل الذي يستخدم خمسة عشر عاملا فاكثر ان يعد في كل محل او فرع يزاول فيه العمل السجلات والوثائق التالية...
Within the predicate	1	إن هيئة النيابة بمقتضى المادة (31) من الدستوروبناءً على ما قرره مجلسا الأعيان والنواب تصادق بالنيابة عن جلالته الملك المعظم على القانون الآتي...
Between (Kaanaa) and the subject	1	يكون لمديري دوائر العمل ومفتشي اقسام التفتيش بوزارة العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية صفة الضبط القضائي في تطبيق احكام هذا القانون واللوائح والقرارات والاوامر التي تصدر تنفيذا له.
Conditional sentence		
Between the conditional clause and the result clause	4	واذا انتهت مدة الاكتتاب بدون ان يبلغ الاكتتاب في اسهم الشركة 75 % من راس المال الاسمي، بما في ذلك اسهم المؤسسين، يسمح بتمديد مدة الاكتتاب لفترة اخرى لا تزيد على 60 ستين يوما. إذا اصبح عدد اعضاء الشركة دون الحد القانوني يحسب نوعها وجب اكمال العدد....
Within the conditional clause	7	اذا ظهر من تقرير المفتش ان عضوا في مجلس الادارة او مديرا مفوضا او عضوا في الشركة او اي مسؤول فيها، حاليا او سابقا، قد اتى عملا يسال عنه وجب على المسجل ابلاغ الجهات المختصة بذلك، لاتخاذ الاجراء المناسب. اذا قرر المسجل، خلال 15 خمسة عشر يوم من استلامه لقرار تحول الشركة والعقد المعدل انهما متماشيان مع القانون، يصادق على قرار التحول والعقد المعدل بدون تاخير، ويبلغ الشركة بذلك.
Within the result clause	10	اذا قرر المسجل خلال فترة 15 خمسة عشر يوما من استلامه للقرارات انها تتماشى مع القانون، يقوم بدون تاخير باصدار اذن بنشرها، ويبلغ الشركات ذات العلاقة بقراره. فاذا لم تتم التسوية بالودية تعين على الدائرة المذكورة خلال اسبوعين من تاريخ تقديم الطلب اليها احالة النزاع الى المحكمة المختصة

The most frequent location of the syntactic discontinuities in Arabic legislative texts is between the verb and the subject in the verbal sentence, with a frequency of 52. This is followed by the location "between the subject and the complement" where there are 39 instances of syntactic discontinuities. The locations between the subject and the predicate, within the subject, within the result clause, within the subject and within the complement have frequencies between 10 and 16 in the documents. Between the conditional clause and the result clause, and within the conditional clause locations of syntactic

discontinuities are 4 and 7 respectively. Only one occurrence was found of the following locations; within the predicate and between (*Kaanaa* or *?inna*) and the subject, which means that syntactic discontinuities are rarely located in those positions.

There were 115 occurrences of syntactic discontinuities in the verbal sentence compared to 32 in nominal and 21 in the conditional clauses. This means that syntactic discontinuities are more likely to be used in verbal sentences than nominal ones.

Let us now turn our attention to the functions syntactic discontinuities have in the legislative sentence. Viewed in terms of its configuration, a legislative provision will very often consist of two major elements: the provisionary clause and the qualification insertions. (For further details of these notions, see Bhatia 1982 and 1993; Yankova 2006 and Sabra 2008). Syntactically, however, qualification insertions may occur initially (i.e. as case descriptions), medially (as syntactic discontinuities) or otherwise or in the final position of the sentence. As our attention in this section is focused on syntactic discontinuities, we shall consider only the functions that the members of this particular category perform in our corpus, leaving other functions for future research.

The analysis of the corpus shows that the most salient functions syntactic discontinuities serve in Arabic legislative texts are as follows:

a. Specifying the circumstances under which a provision may apply:

1) يتولى مؤسس شركة محدودة المسؤولية، عندما لا يكون للشركة مؤسسين اخرين، او مؤسس المشروع الفردي اعداد بيان يقوم مقام عقد الشركة وتسري عليه الاحكام التي تطبق على العقد حيثما وردت في هذا القانون.

2) وللمحكمة في حالة الحكم بعدم قبول الدعوى او رفضها ان تحكم على رافعها بالمصروفات كلها او بعضها.

b. Assigning volitional control:

3) ممن جند في المملكة دون موافقة الحكومة جنوداً للقتال لمصلحة دولة أجنبية عوقب بالاعتقال المؤقت.

4) نحن زايد بن سلطان آل نهيان رئيس دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة، بعد الاطلاع على احكام الدستور المؤقت، وعلى القانون رقم (1) لسنة 1972 في شأن اختصاصات الوزارات وصلاحيات الوزراء والقوانين المعدلة له، وبناء على ما عرضه وزير العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية وموافقة مجلس الوزراء والمجلس الوطني الاتحادي وتصديق المجلس الاعلى اصدرنا القانون الاتي

5) يقوم وزير التجارة، وكما يراه مناسبا، باصدار لوائح وجداول تشمل الرسوم الاخرى لتغطية الخدمات الاخرى المقدمة من قبل مسجل الشركات

d. Describing the case:

6) يعطى المكتتب باسهم الشركة المساهمة، بعد تسديده الاقساط المستحقة وابرازه الوصولات المثبتة لذلك، شهادة مؤقتة برقم متسلسل وموقعة من شخص مخول من الشركة...

e. Specifying the purpose of the provision:

7) يشترط لجواز الدمج بين الشركات ان لا يؤدي الدمج الى..

8) تتخذ لغرض الدمج، الاجراءات الاتية..

f. Identifying the legal means through which the provision will be implemented:

9) يعين وزير العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية بقرار منه دوائر العمل ومكاتبها التي تختص بتطبيق احكام هذا القانون واختصاصها المكاني.

10) على البائع ابلاغ المساهمين الاخرين، بواسطة المدير المفوض، برغبته في بيع اسهمه....

11) ويجوز بقرار من الهيئة العامة الاستمرار في الاستقطاع لحساب الاحتياطي الالزامي...

g. Expressing temporal relations, .i.e. information as to when the provision will be effective:

12) يجب على صاحب العمل قبل تشغيل اي حدثان يستحصل منه على المستندات الآتية وان يقوم بحفظها في ملف الحدث الخاص

13) على صاحب العمل او من ينوب عنه ان يعلم العامل عند استخدامه بمخاطر مهنته ووسائل الوقاية الواجب عليه اتخاذها

14) على المؤسسين، خلال 30 ثلاثين يوما من انتهاء مدة الاعتراض على الاكتتاب او رده. تزويد المسجل بجميع المعلومات …

 h. Specifying the scope of the provision:

15) وتعتبر السنة الميلادية في تطبيق احكام هذا القانون 365 يوما والشهر 30 يوما الا اذا نص عقد العمل على خلاف ذلك.

It is interesting to note that certain functions do not appear in the corpus in the form of syntactic discontinuities. These include, for example, the specification of the manner in which the provision is to operate and textual authority. But the conclusions arrived at here are based on a fairly limited corpus and certainly further research is required in order to provide a more detailed picture of this particular aspect of the legislative sentence in Arabic. Future researchers also need to determine the correlation between a given grammatical category, its location in the sentence and the function it serves.

8. Findings

In the three Arabic legislative texts examined in this paper, the percentages of the passive verbs slightly vary from one document to the next. The average percentage is around 24%. That is to say, one quarter of the verbs in Arabic legislative writings is passive. This is a very significant percentage compared to the use of passive in other genres. It is comparable to William's findings regarding the use of passive in legal English in his two studies (2004) and (2013) (see passivization page 5). This confirms that passivization is a common feature in both Arabic and English legislative texts. Consequently, translators are not expected to encounter difficulties when rendering a legal text from Arabic into English or vice versa in terms of passivization.

The results of investigating the second feature, sentence length, are quite revealing and would perhaps not fit expectations. Legal language, whether in Arabic or English, is believed to be dominated by complex sentences with heavy reliance on coordination and subordination. However, statistics relating to sentence length show that it averages 23 words. This figure represents half the average number of words in the legal English sentence which is 55 words (Gotti 2008:85). Indeed, half of the sentences in the three documents contains 20 words or less. The percentages of sentences containing 50 or more words, however, are 3%, 4% and 7% in the three documents. This contradicts the long-held assumption

that long sentences are commonly used in legal style. Teachers of legal translation ought to familiarize their students with this difference when translating between these two languages. This implies that translators and translation trainees need to adopt the strategies of splitting sentences when translating from English into Arabic and merging sentences when translating in the other direction.

As for the sentence type, studies have already revealed that the processes of coordination, embedding and subordination have contributed to the predominance of the complex sentence. The same statements were also made about legislative Arabic though such statements were largely impressionistic and intuitive in nature.

The situation in Arabic was slightly different as theoreticians and translation instructors reached the same conclusions albeit intuitively. This position is reflected in El-Farahaty (2015) who stated that "English legal language is known for its long and complex sentences". She also stressed that "legal Arabic displays complexity by using both coordinated clauses and embedded and relative clauses". Our analysis shows that complex sentences form 82% of the sentences in the Jordanian Penal Code and around half of the sentences in the other two documents. The striking finding was that the simple sentence is the second most frequent sentence type; it constitutes a percentage of one quarter on average in the three documents. The third finding in this regard is that the compound sentence is the least frequent sentence form. This conclusion runs counter to the claim made by many including El-Farahaty who stated that "it is a common feature of Arabic to favor coordination through the conjunction و (*and*)".

The average percentage of sentences with case descriptions is around 8%, The Iraqi Companies Law has twice as many as the other two documents, as it has more specifications and exclusions with regards to company types, status …etc. These case descriptions are used to generalize, specify, make exception or add to the provision or condition following it. The prominent phrase of case description is the prepositional phrase, with an average of 7 % of the sentences in an Arabic legislative text starting with such a phrase.

The average percentage of sentences containing syntactic discontinuities is around 17%, while in one document one quarter of the sentences included such a segment. The most common phrase type in syntactic discontinuity is the prepositional phrase, with an average of 9.5%. As for their location, most syntactic discontinuities (52 occurrences) are located between the subject and the verb. The second most common location is between the subject and the complement, with 39 instances. The locations between the subject (topic) and the predicate, within the subject (topic), within the complement, within the subject and within the result clause occur between 16-10 respectively. It is noticed that syntactic discontinuities appear in the verbal sentence more than the nominal and conditional sentences.

What are the implications of these findings to text analysis, translators, and translation pedagogy at large? Firstly, the findings of this research establish statistically the significance of each of the syntactic features analyzed. The analysis of these features, along with their relative importance, will therefore add

to the repertoire of text types studied in Arabic. This will enable researchers to further compare legislative Arabic and English at the theoretical level. Pedagogically, these findings can also be highlighted in translation classes and compared to their English counterparts, the purpose being to enhance the trainees' awareness of the pertinent syntactic and stylistic features of legislative texts in Arabic. More importantly, the similarities and differences between English and Arabic legislative sentences can be employed in the training of translation students as well as in the creation of more stylistically appropriate target texts in both languages. An instance would be the prevalence of passive in English and Arabic legislative texts; though Arabic, in general, tends to favor active voice structures, legislative texts in both languages employ the passive voice quite extensively. This could encourage students to use passive structures in the target text in either language without violating the stylistic norms of the language in question. By comparison, English legislative sentences tend to contain on average twice as many words as their counterparts in Arabic. This being the case, one may recommend the syntactic simplification of the English source text and, conversely, the possibility of conflating clauses and sentences to create more complex structures when translating from Arabic into English. The analysis, additionally, shows that Arabic legislative texts use more syntactic discontinuities than case descriptions in general. Accordingly translators may be encouraged to turn at least some English case descriptions into Arabic syntactic discontinuities in order to conform more closely to the style of Arabic legislative writing.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, the main syntactic features of the Arabic legislative sentence were examined. The frequency of passivization was determined, showing that, just like English, the percentage of passivization in Arabic legislative texts is around a quarter of the total number of verbs. Sentence length in Arabic legislative writing was investigated; surprisingly, it revealed that the average number of words in a sentence is 23 words, which is significantly short compared to sentence length in legal English. Sentence types and their frequencies were also investigated; the complex sentence was shown to be the most frequent sentence type in Arabic legislative texts, followed by simple, compound-complex and compound sentence. Case descriptions and syntactic discontinuities were analyzed in terms of their frequencies, syntactic patterns, locations and functions. The findings revealed that around 8% of the sentences of Arabic legislative writing start with case descriptions, most of which are prepositional phrases. Syntactic discontinuities, by comparison, are more frequently used as 17% of the sentences include such a segment, and most of these syntactic discontinuities are in the form of prepositional phrases.

The findings of the statistical corpus-based analysis carried out in this study contribute to the fields of discourse analysis, translation, contrastive linguistics and legal language. Identifying the salient features of Arabic legislative sentence helps all those who learn, train or teach in the field of translation studies to better understand and handle the problems encountered in dealing with this text sub-

genre. In addition, this understanding paves the way for comparing and contrasting the prominent features used in Arabic and English legislative sentences.

The study is limited to investigating certain syntactic features of Arabic legislative sentences in three documents. In order to validate the statements made in the paper, larger corpus-based data are needed to be examined. Alternatively, other important issues for future research may include the investigation of other features peculiar to Arabic legislative writing such as nominalization, ellipsis, prepositional phrases, text cohesion and reference. Describing Arabic legal language, particularly legislative language, is a fertile area of research. Other text types of legal Arabic also need to be investigated through corpus-based analysis.

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