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A Syntactic Study of International Law as Represented by UN Human Rights Treaties in 2006

by

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﴿ وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴾ طه ١١٤

{and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."}

Ta-Ha 114

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Abstract

This thesis explores the syntactic features of the UN human rights treaties of the 2000s as an instance of public international law. The analyzed corpus comprises the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED) in 2006, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. The study adopts both a corpus-based approach by using Biber et al.'s (2007) Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (LGSWE) as a framework and a corpus-driven approach by relying on the corpus evidence. AntConc software is mainly used for the quantitative analysis. The findings prove that the language of law has distinct syntactic features that distinguish it from other varieties of language. The analysis also reveals the functions of these features, and shows that the language of law can be ambiguous.

Key words: syntactic features – language of law – UN human rights treaties – corpus linguistics – LGSWE

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACAD	Academic prose
Art.	Article
BNC	British National Corpus
BoE	The Bank of English
CANCODE	Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English
cf.	compare
CGEL	A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
COHA	Corpus of Historical American English
CONV	conversation
CPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DPI	Department of Public Information
e.g.	*Latin* exempli gratia (for example)
et al.	*Latin* et alii (and others)
etc.	et cetera
FICT	fiction writing
ICE	International Corpus of English
ICLE	International Corpus of Learner English
i.e.	*Latin* id est (that is)
KWIC	key word in context
LGSWE	Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English
LSWE	The Longman Spoken and Written English
MICASE	The Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English
NEWS	news writing
NOW	News on the Web
NP	Noun Phrase
O_d	Direct object
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
POS	part-of-speech
S	Subject
.txt	a file extension for a plain text file
UDHR	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNO	United Nations Organization
V	Verb (phrase)
v./ vs.	versus
†	truncated example