

An overview of research in economic and business translation in Spain

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Abstract: This article includes an overview of the main publications within the economic translation field in Spain with the aim to see and describe how research trends have gradually become more and more specialised. Among the research activity in the field we present articles and books, as well as the doctoral theses and research projects. These works have been compiled considering the areas of study and without exhaustive spirit. Furthermore, we include some examples of national and international conferences and congresses on economic translation that demonstrate the importance attributed to this field in Spain over the last ten to fifteen years.

Keywords: economic translation, research in economic translation, economic-financial translation, research in economic-financial translation, bibliography in economic translation.

1. Economic translation: concept and purpose of study

The internationalisation of business, the globalisation of financial markets and the relationships between economies worldwide have led to a rapid increase in the translation of economic and business documents over the last few years. Against this backdrop, the work of an economic translator is essential for small and medium-sized companies who want to market their products abroad, for multinationals who do business in other countries and for national and international public bodies whose scope of activity and influence requires them to use different languages.

The foregoing reasons justify the increased demand for professionals in this specialised field. Economic and business translation is, undoubtedly, one of the most

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requested and best paid fields in the translation industry and it is currently one of the main career routes chosen by new translation and interpreting graduates.

2. An overview of research in economic translation in Spain¹

As we will see later on, an examination of the research in economic translation landscape in Spain shows an important shift from a linguistically-dominant approach –focussing on the analysis and comparison of language structures used in the translation process– to an alternative approach that combines these same linguistic elements with other more applied approaches.

Throughout this process, there has consistently been a clear desire to name, identify and define the purpose of study within the economic translation field. The complex process of correctly specifying this purpose of study, i.e. which texts are included, has undoubtedly been one of the main stumbling blocks in this field of research and this continues to be the case. This has obviously led to difficulties when agreeing on a single name to refer to this field of expertise, resulting in several terms being used at the same time that are not necessarily perfect or absolute synonyms.

Some of the names used most commonly by academics and researchers in this field are *economic translation*, *economic and financial translation*, *legal and economic translation* and *socioeconomic translation*. As several authors have however argued –Herrero Rodes and Román Mínguez (2015; 2014; 2013), Román Mínguez (2015), Mateo Martínez (2014), Suau Jiménez (2010) and Gallego Hernández (in COMENEGO 'Corpus Multilingüe de Economía y Negocios)–, the proposed terms of *the translation of documents from the economics and business field* or *translation of economic and corporate documents* are those that best cover the sub-specialities within this complex and extensive field of knowledge.

Despite a number of attempts, no agreement has been reached as to which single term covers the entire variety of texts. Research in economic translation, and also the subjects included in university course programmes focusing on this area of study, continues to reflect this nominal disparity.

We can see therefore that the complex task of naming this field of expertise arises, specifically, from the wide variety of texts in this specialised area and which are the purpose of study for lecturers and researchers of economic translation. Not only have experts been faced with the challenge of agreeing upon a convincing name for this translation field (a challenge they continue to face today), but also, and specifically, of defining the type of text that should be included under the economic translation heading.

The authors of this article have experience as professional translators and lecturers in this field. Since 2011 they have produced different classifications of types of economic and business texts for several publications and conferences.

Generally speaking, without going into detail about the taxonomies proposed by other experts and by the authors of this paper themselves, we can determine that this specialist area covers texts and discourse from two relatively distinct fields of

knowledge. The first of these is economics –both macroeconomics and microeconomics–, and the second is business, which also includes other subject areas that often overlap, such as corporate documents, accounting, foreign trade, financial markets and finance.

Furthermore, despite the wide range of texts within this specialisation, research and teaching in economic translation have focused on certain documents to the detriment of others. Over the following pages, we will establish that even against the backdrop of growing interest in economic and business translation from academics and researchers mentioned at the beginning of this article, research tends to largely focus on the subject areas most frequently translated by professionals in this field. As in other areas of specialised translation with significant career opportunities and, despite attempts to change this situation, this practice proves that there is still a gap between the working world and what is taught in the classroom.

The number of articles, doctoral theses, monographs and lexicographical studies on different aspects of economic and business translation has increased significantly over the last few years. The first papers on economic translation were however written two decades ago. Generally speaking, these papers focus on an analysis of the different aspects of business discourse in Spanish and English and on teaching these specialised languages. The majority of the research belongs to the field of teaching languages for specific purposes and foreign language learning, and it is used in the Spanish or English departments of different universities and in Spanish or English, national or international, magazines or conferences for specific purposes.

These papers include, but are not limited to, the studies by Gómez de Enterría on specialised economic and commercial discourse and how it is used to teach business Spanish (2010; 2009); the study by González Grueso (2006) which highlights the appropriateness of including the collocations found in business Spanish in the teaching of this specialised language; the paper by Ainciburu (2006) on commercial vocabulary in Spanish; the paper by Riutort Cánovas (2005), which proposes a number of materials for teaching business Spanish; the study by Gayo Corbella and Gómez Molina (2000) on approaches to business Spanish; and, finally, the Dile project (an interactive, multimedia Spanish business course launched in 1995).

There is also a lot of research into English for specific purposes and teaching business English. As it is impossible to include the large number of studies published in Spain to date, here are, by way of illustration, some examples: the study by Mateo Martínez on the language of economic science (2007); the doctoral thesis by Loma-Osorio Fontecha (2005), which analyses the structure and function of economic text so as to determine the basis of the lexicon and grammar used in economic discourse in Spanish and English; the paper by Arribas Baño (2005), in which the author analyses the issue of representing meaning in bilingual business dictionaries from the perspective of someone studying business English as a foreign language; the empirical assessment of certain aspects relating to Spanish students learning business English by Fuertes Olivera and Gómez Martínez (2004); the linguistic description of

business English by Cortés de los Ríos (2003); Chueca Moncayo's thesis (2002), which looks at terminology as a cohesive element in economic-financial discourse in English; the book by professor Alcaraz Varó titled *El inglés profesional y académico* published in 2000, which looks at theoretical issues applied to business English based on lexicology, morphological and syntactic properties and text type –probably the type of professional and academic English that has most often been studied as a specialist language–; and two final examples relating to business English include the work by Felices Lago (1999) on the outlook for and features of business English within the framework of English for specific purposes, and the study by Orts Llopis titled *A Crash Course In Business English* (1998).

Terminology research papers have likewise provided another interesting source of research in the field of Spanish business language. There are many studies on the influence of English on Spanish vocabulary in the business field, including papers on cognates, loan words and Anglicisms, and it would be impossible to list them all here. By way of example, we would like to highlight the work by IULA (Institute of Applied Linguistics) at Universidad Pompeu Fabra de Barcelona, which organised the 6th International Terminology Symposium on literalness and dynamism within economic discourse during the summer of 2007. Experts in economics, economic translation, terminology and discourse analysis looked at issues such as metaphors in economic discourse, the forming of neologisms and the high level of innovation in Spanish business discourse which comes mainly from English via semantic changes, acronyms and loan words.

Within the lexicography field, numerous works have been published in connection with the economics and business field in Spain. A few examples of Spanish dictionaries include the fourteenth edition of *Diccionario de Economía y Finanzas* by Tamames and Gallego (2010), *Diccionario de términos financieros y de inversión* by Mochón Morcillo and Isidro Aparicio (2006), *Diccionario práctico de bolsa* by González García and Torres Martín (2005), and *Diccionario de mercados financieros* by Heras (2000).

Bilingual lexicographical works also play an incredibly important role, contributing knowledge to the field of terminology research at the same time as being a very useful tool for economic and business translation teachers-professionals and also for students of this subject. In terms of the English-Spanish/Spanish-English language combination, it is worth highlighting the updated version of *Diccionario de términos económicos, financieros y comerciales inglés-español, Spanish-English* by Alcaraz Varó, Hughes et al. (2012), *Diccionario de contabilidad inglés-español* by Fuertes Olivera (2010), and *Diccionario de términos de la banca (inglés-español/español-inglés)* by Mateo Martínez (2009). Other important works in this field are *Diccionario bilingüe de economía y empresa inglés-español/español-inglés* by Lozano Irueste (2005), *Diccionario de términos de la bolsa (inglés-español/español-inglés)* by Mateo Martínez and Alcaraz Varó (2003), *Diccionario terminológico de ciencias económicas y empresariales español-inglés* by Muñiz

Castro (2003) and *Diccionario Bancario Español-Inglés e Inglés-Español* by Gil Esteban (2000).

We must also mention other published works that analyse economic discourse in English and Spanish and are useful not only when researching languages for specific purposes, but also when researching economic and business translation. We therefore note the study by Cortés de los Ríos and Cruz Martínez (2001), which analyses economic-business type texts and is a contrastive study of a business letter in English and Spanish; the doctoral thesis by Pizarro Sánchez (2001), which looks at economic discourse in English; the study by Blanco Gómez and Henderson Osborne (1997) on the issue of economic English, which also looks at the transfer of Spanish to English; and finally, the contrastive analysis on verbal syntagm in English and Spanish economic texts by Valero Garcés (1996).

Among the different approaches to economic discourse, some papers focus entirely on translation issues. Within economic and business research, one of the topics that researchers have always found most intriguing is the translation of metaphors, as shown by the many studies on this subject. Here we include just some of these papers: the working methodology proposed by Galanes Santos and Alves (2015) for looking at the many perspectives offered on the financial crisis in the written press; the paper by Barceló Martínez and Delgado Pugés (2015) on metaphors used in journalistic texts about the stock market; the analysis by Le Poder (2009) of metaphors used in the economic and financial press; the paper by Orts Llopis and Rojo López (2008), which compares the metaphors used in financial reports in English and Spanish; and the studies by Fuertes Olivera (2007; 2006; 1998) on translating metaphors in economic documents.

Another subject that has stirred up great interest among economic and business translation researchers, and continues to do so, is the translation of foreign trade documents. Here we list several works, including the paper by Orts Llopis (2016) on the translator and international trade; the study by Medina Reguera and Morón Martín (2016) on the skill of the translator in the context of business internationalisation; the doctoral thesis by Álvarez García (2015) on translators' and interpreters' access to expert foreign trade knowledge, and the article by this same author (2011) on the language of international trade; the book by Socorro Trujillo (2008) on textual and terminological issues in mercantile documents within the international trade field, which can be applied to translation teaching; the paper by Socorro Trujillo and García Morales (2008), which analyses Anglicisms in international trade and includes examples of this type of document in English and Spanish so as to offer solutions to some of the translation problems linked to semiotics of culture; the study by Medina Reguera (2007) on text types and content in the German to Spanish translation of foreign trade documents; the article on commercial translation by Mayoral Asensio (2007); the paper by Fuertes Olivera, García de Quesada and Montero Martínez (2005) on the problems of and solutions to cultural and discursive models in the translation of international trade texts; and finally, the doctoral thesis by Socorro Trujillo (2002), which lays out a teaching

model for the translation of mercantile documents in the international trade field (English-Spanish).

Specifically, within the foreign trade field, COMINTRAD (Corpus Multilingüe de Economía y Negocios) was launched on the localisation of corporate websites and multilingual e-marketing to foster the internationalisation of Spanish SMEs. This ongoing project is led by Dr. Medina Reguera of Universidad Pablo de Olavide in Seville.

Economic and business translation within Spanish universities has also attracted the attention, albeit tentatively, of researchers, as shown in the small number of papers that look at how this subject is reflected in graduate and postgraduate level teaching programmes: Herrero Rodes and Román Mínguez (2017), Mateo Martínez (2014) and Alcalde Peñalver (2014).

In terms of studies on the teaching of economic and business translation, the results of survey-based research carried out by Gallego Hernández, Koby and Román (2016b) show that one of the main common interests shared by economic translation lecturers at Spanish universities is research in teaching applied to economic translation. As mentioned by Gallego Hernández in his research paper on teaching economic translation in Spain (2016) and by Alcalde Peñalver in her doctoral thesis (2014), the number of research projects focussing on this issue has increased rapidly.

The range of research on teaching economic translation includes the study by Gallego Hernández and Román Mínguez (2017) on classroom programming in research on economic translation teaching, the papers by Román Mínguez (2014; 2010; 2008) on exercises, resources and materials to help students gain skills and meet didactic objectives in the English-Spanish language combination; the article by Lobato Patricio and Ruíz García (2013) on translation techniques and translation problem-solving in informative, economic texts translated from French to Spanish; the article by Barceló Martínez and Delgado Pugés (2011; 2010) on designing activities for and acquiring skills in French to Spanish translation training; the methodology proposed by Gallego Hernández (2010) for analysing texts and documentary sources in the context of teaching economic, financial and commercial translation; the paper by Vanhecke (2010) on teaching-learning legal and economic translation; the paper by Lobato and Durán (2010) on teaching using informative, economic texts; and finally, the paper by Cánovas et al. (2003) on teaching legal and economic translation.

Similarly, Jordan Núñez' masters dissertation (2013) on the design of an English-Spanish economic translation course within the EHEA and Alcalde Peñalver's masters dissertation (2011) are also interesting points of reference with regards teaching economic and business translation.

In 2013, the authors of this research paper launched an teaching innovation project as part of the degree in translation and interpreting at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid called Resources and materials applicable to the teaching-learning process in English-Spanish economic and financial translation. During the 2009-2010 academic year, professor Le Poder at Universidad de Granada also produced an

innovative teaching innovation project as part of the introduction to economic translation modules which aimed to increase students' understanding of the subject.

Another line of research that has recently sparked the authors' interest is the classification of genres or types of text within the economic and business field. Here we note the research papers by Herrero Rodes and Román Mínguez (2015; 2014; 2013) which set out different classifications of economic and business genres, and the study by Herrero Rodes (2011) on the usefulness of classifying macroeconomic and financial documents separately. Pizarro Sánchez (2010) also looks at this issue, as Suau Jiménez' book (2010), which tackles the issue of economic and business genres. And finally, the paper by Monzó (2005) also analyses genres in legal, economic and administrative translation.

Researchers have also recently taken an interest in accounting translation, although, in our opinion, there is still very little research on this subject given the high demand of this type of document on the professional market. It is important to note the article by Román Mínguez (2016) on basic subject knowledge applicable to accounting translation, the articles by Gallego Hernández (2014b; 2012) on assessing terminological resources in the translation of accounting documents and financial statements, and the studies by Carmona Sandoval (2014; 2013; 2012) and Alcalde Peñalver (2013) on translating balance sheets. Lastly, we mention the doctoral thesis by Pizarro Sánchez (2001) on the translation into English of annual reports.

When looking at research on economic and business translation, we need to include the COMENEGO (Corpus Multilingüe de Economía y Negocios), which is coordinated by professor Gallego Hernández at Universidad de Alicante since 2014. This corpus is based, in part, on the delivery of surveys to recipients and providers of translation services and includes (in English, French and German, with Spanish) some of the most common economic and business text types seen in the professional translation field. We should also mention the Monzó Nebot project (2005) on reeducation and deculturation through genres in legal, economic and administrative translation; and the inter-university R+D MEC project: HUM 2004-03229/FILO, Bibliographic resources for translation, writing and terminology in the legal and economic fields (in Spanish, French and English) by Martínez López and Ortega Arjonilla (2004), which appeared in a publication on this same subject (2006).

Although there is some research on economic translation within translation monographs (Román Mínguez 2015, Carmona Sandoval 2014, Barceló Martínez and Delgado Pugés 2010), monographic volumes given over entirely to economic translation are still very rare. Some examples include *La traducción económica, financiera y comercial: de la teoría a la formación y práctica profesional* published by Gallego Hernández, Koby and Román Mínguez in 2016 (2016a); the monographic article in *Revista Hermeneus* titled *Traducción económica: entre profesión, formación y recursos documentales*, published by Gallego Hernández (2014a), which included ten pieces of research on the subject, many of which looked at teaching in this specialised translation field; the monograph by Suau Jiménez (2010) titled *La traducción especializada (en inglés y español en géneros de economía y empresa)*;

and the work by Pizarro Sánchez (2010) called *Análisis y traducción del texto económico*.

Conferences devoted entirely to economic translation in Spain are also few and far between, although we are convinced that they will take off in time. We must therefore mention the International Congress on Economic, Commercial, Financial and Institutional Translation that was held at Universidad de Alicante from 29 to 31 May 2014 and which will be held for the third time in June 2018, once again in Alicante. This congress brought together university staff and industry professionals from different countries. The congress also appeared in two publications (Gallego Hernández 2015a; 2015b). Similarly, Gallego Hernández organised three seminars at Universidad de Alicante on economic and institutional translation (teaching, research and the profession) in 2012, 2013 and 2014. The monograph on profession, training and documentary resources in economic translation (2014a) mentioned in the previous paragraph was written as a result of the first two seminars.

3. Conclusions

We believe it was necessary to begin this article by looking at the terminological instability surrounding economic translation that still exists today and the difficulty in agreeing the boundaries of this field of expertise, showing that two of the key challenges faced in all fields of research –specifying the name used and defining the purpose of study– have not yet been met.

In this paper we have included a representative sample of the main pieces of research on economic and business translation in Spain. Given the growing interest in this field of expertise over the last few years, it would be impossible to include all the research undertaken in this subject area. We have therefore included an open-ended list of works showing how research in economic translation in Spain has changed over the last two decades.

We have verified that the first pieces of research in the field of expertise under study here focus on teaching business or economic Spanish and English, and the majority of these works do this within the framework of teaching languages for specific purposes and foreign language learning. The issues that are most often the subject of research include the features of economic discourse, the influence of English used in this specialist field on the vocabulary of other languages, the acronyms used in economic language and the recurrence of Anglicisms, metaphors and neologisms in economic texts.

In comparison with this focus on issues closely related to formal aspects of language, around ten years ago research started to become more translation focused. Currently, the teaching of economic translation is the area of research that has generated the most interest and the greatest number of papers. In fact, this subject area has quickly garnered attention over the last few years with considerable interest in curricula design and the classification of genres applicable to the classroom.

There is also an undeniable interest in the translation of foreign trade texts, as we have seen above in the list of research papers on this subject area. The amount of research in areas such as accounting translation has also multiplied, although in relative terms it is still scarce, particularly if we compare it with research on teaching economic and business translation and foreign trade. We believe however that accounting translation will continue to generate interest among researchers given the demand for the translation of this type of document on the professional market.

In comparison, other subject areas within the economics and business fields, such as macroeconomics, financial instruments and financing, do not seem to have grabbed the researchers' attention at this moment in time. Given the trend for closer links between research and the professional world however, we are sure that new research will be undertaken on these subjects, and this will be a welcome move for both teaching and professional practice.

To summarise, and without being disdainful towards philological approaches to economic and business translation, the last decade has witness a change in stance that has focused the interests of researchers more specifically on translation-related issues.

We also wanted to include in this article the conferences organised and the projects launched within this field of expertise, as they are likewise a reflection of the current status of research in economic and business translation. The references mentioned in this article demonstrate that there are still very few conferences and monographs on economic translation in Spain, and that research and innovative teaching projects within this field of expertise are few and far between, as are the papers that look at economic translation within the curricula of Spanish universities. We have however verified that positive steps are being taken in the field of research in economic and business translation and this leads us to be optimistic and to believe that, as we have mentioned, it is simply a question of time before there is a boom in this kind of event and paper.

We are therefore convinced that economic and business translation researchers and teaching staff are now aware of the importance of this discipline and that they are working to produce research projects and academic programmes that increasingly reflect the current status of this field of expertise. We believe that together, working alongside translation professionals, we can continue to join forces to further bridge the gap between the classroom, research and the professional market.

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ⁱ This section contains a non-exhaustive list of Spanish studies, research projects and conferences on economic and business translation. The references, which have been grouped by line of research, are in chronological order, starting with the most recent.