



32nd International Conference of the Spanish Association of Applied Linguistics (AESLA):  
Language Industries and Social Change

## Obstacles in Economic Translation: common, frequent mistakes made by undergraduates

Rebeca Cristina López González\*

*Universidad de Vigo, Vigo 36310, Spain*

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### Abstract

A translator requires a double-sided ability to translate a specialized text. Firstly, the management of a non-native language which must be learnt and fluently used in its written form, and secondly, the comprehension of the specialized content synthesized in its terminology. This study aims to demonstrate how students one-sidedly concentrated on the latter have overlooked the former, thus making serious linguistic mistakes.

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Peer-review under responsibility of Universidad Pablo de Olavide.

*Keywords:* reverse specialised translation; linguistic difficulties; terminology; economic translation

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### 1. Introduction

When facing the challenge of translating an economic text from Spanish into English, translators encounter several difficulties and to tackle these, knowledge of the languages per se (in this case, Spanish and English) does not guarantee the production of a correct text into the target language. Undergraduates must become aware that the translation activity is a complex process demanding the ability to use the appropriate translation techniques and strategies as well as specialised terminology and awareness of any extra crucial meaning to the source text (ST).

To demonstrate how the above-mentioned difficulties quite often arise and are a stumbling block for future professional translators, two of the most common non-specialized language mistakes made while doing reverse

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +34986813412.

E-mail address: [rebecalopez@uvigo.es](mailto:rebecalopez@uvigo.es)

translation, namely, the correct usage of linking words and articles is analysed. Real examples extracted from a class assignment will be used to illustrate how 14 students might have overlooked the proper use of general English due to their concern about the specialized content which needs to be transferred. Gallego Hernández and Barraón López (2012) have succinctly stated this previous idea:

Economic translation in a training context involves added difficulties due to the different sort of mistakes made by trainee translators. Although it might be possible to think that most of these mistakes are related to specialized aspects (terminology, concepts, specialized phraseology) of Economy, Finance, Commerce, etc. (and, in fact, there are numerous studies, for example, in the translation of terminology), it is also possible to identify mistakes actually related to language in general, whether maternal or foreign. (My translation)

Not only the right transfer of the specialized aspects of the source text (ST) onto the target text (TT) but also the right basic English will result in the creation of a professional assignment as will be seen herein.

## **2. Introduction to the economic reverse translation (Spanish>English) module**

For clarity, a brief outline of how the subject of Economic Translation (Spanish-English) is offered at the University of Vigo is described below.

Planning is one of the key elements in the teaching activity. As Roberto Mayoral Asensio (1997) has noted:

The learning process demands an enormous deceleration of the translation process in so far as the student must acquire an awareness of the process, which the professional follows automatically and unconsciously. (My translation)

Throughout this learning process, Mayoral also emphasizes the importance of establishing some quality objectives which are essential for training inexperienced translators who lack knowledge of the topic and how to find the right sources.

With this in mind, the main aim of this course is to introduce the specialization of translating economic and commercial texts through the theoretical and practical study of direct and reverse translation. Approximately 60 students are conveniently divided into three small groups of about 20. Numbers might vary depending on registration for each academic year.

This subject is taught in the fourth and final year compulsory for the Translation and Interpreting degree with reverse translation courses into English previously offered (6 ECTS). So, language in use has been exposed to these future translators, yet, in real practice there is evidence that the incorrect usage of general language hinders the production of adequate translations as will be seen in this paper.

Concepts such as GDP, inflation, unemployment, taxes or social security are familiar to some students. However, these concepts are presented again to avoid any basic voids taking place during their training. Special attention is also paid to document research by using parallel texts and resource hunting to ensure credibility and accuracy.

Speaking English in class is also recommended and promoted via 10-20 minute student presentations. The themes of these presentations are suggested by the professor, and guidance is offered during office hours.

## **3. Methodology**

Hypothetically, the lack of a proper decision-making process due to overlooking general language while translating results in firstly, a poor translation into English, secondly, a misuse of terminology and thirdly, in consequence of these previous two, the production of a text which does not reach professional quality standards. This concerns professors preparing undergraduates about to enter the market demanding reverse translations into English.

The method followed to carry out this case study had the collaboration of 14 subjects who regularly attended the Economic Reverse Translation sessions (Spanish>English). These 14 undergraduates were asked to translate at home the first eight paragraphs of the document titled *Radiografía del gasto público en España* written by Prof.

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