

Knowledge and perceptions of the profession of translators and interpreters among legal practitioners in Spain

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Abstract

Although legal professionals may be fully aware of the regulations on the right to translation and interpreting, they tend to be less aware of the implications of legal and sworn translation and interpreting. It is therefore of the utmost importance to develop the current state of knowledge on translation and interpreting in legal contexts, in a way that will professionalise the image of translators and interpreters in these areas. After conducting previous research studies in which we analysed the combination of language and law in university curricula and another one in which we sought to raise awareness among law students about the importance of interdisciplinary work between linguists and legal experts (2017a), with this study we aimed to go further by conducting research on how much legal professionals know about translation and interpreting in Spain. After a preliminary literature review on the topic, we will explain the methodology of our study and then show the results of the survey that was distributed among legal professionals in Spain. The conclusions will allow us to critically reflect on the topic and suggest ways to go past the thick veil of ignorance that still covers the work carried out by professional translators and interpreters.

Keywords: legal experts; legal translation; legal interpreters; sworn translation.

1. Introduction

Although legal professionals may be fully aware of the regulations on the right to translation and interpreting, they are not usually aware of what legal and sworn translation and interpreting means. If we compare the profession of the legal and sworn translator and interpreter with other fields, it is a fact that it is undervalued and under a thick veil of professional and social ignorance. As Way (2016: 1010) stated, “unless you have used the services of a legal translator, you are unlikely to know of their existence. [...] Legal translators do, however, exist and have been practicing their profession for centuries.” This is also in line with what Scott argued in a recent study (2017: 59):

In the last ten years, Translation Studies has taken an increasing interest in professionalization, often linked with status. [...] Conclusions refer over and over again to low status and visibility issues. Very little of this research, however, concentrates solely on legal translators.

The variety of descriptors used to refer to the profession of legal translators (jurist-linguist, legal linguist, legal translation practitioner, freelance legal translator, etc.) also shows lack of coherence with regard to the level of familiarisation with the profession (Scott, 2017). As this author states, this leads to “confused and/or conflicting nomenclature in several key areas; denigratory connotations running through most terms used in practice; a lack of support from or regulation by either official sources or professional bodies as regards job title; and low levels of occupational prestige” (Scott, 2017: 68-69). It is therefore of the utmost importance to develop the current state of knowledge on translation and interpreting in legal contexts, in a way that will professionalise the image of translators and interpreters in these areas. In a previous descriptive study (Alcalde and Pajares, 2017b) we analysed the combination of language and law in university curricula to determine the weight that these subjects had in higher education. Another study by the authors had the aim of raising awareness among law students about the importance of interdisciplinary work between linguists and legal experts (2017a). Therefore, with this study we aimed to go further to analyse how much legal professionals in Spain know about translation and interpreting in their country. This paper opens with a literature review on the topic. Next the methodology of our study is presented with information about the instrument and participants. After that, the results of the study are analysed and illustrated with examples from the data. Finally, the conclusions will allow us to critically reflect on the topic and suggest ways to go past the thick veil of ignorance that still covers the work carried out by professional translators and interpreters.

2. The importance of collaboration between linguists and legal experts

In the last few years, Spanish law firms’ workload and foreign business activity in Spain have increased and so has the number of English speaking immigrants (Vázquez y del Árbol, 2015). In fact, the continuous globalisation and the internationalisation of many activities require

the growing intervention of highly specialised language professionals in legal contexts (Lara Aguado, 2016). This can also contribute to ensure the rights of those who lack normalised linguistic access to public services (Jiménez Salcedo and Moreno Rivero, 2017). Indeed, the need of collaboration between translators and linguists has been defended by many authors. This is the case of a study published in 2009 by Bestué, who stated that translators should work in close collaboration with jurists to make them aware of the importance of their work, since the translation of terms marked by another legal culture may have undesirable side effects. Townsley (2011: 7) also made the following statement:

It is often observed that the professional skills of the legal interpreter and translator are not widely understood outside the profession itself or the academic discipline of Linguistics, resulting in a lack of understanding between judicial and linguistic professionals on how to cooperate effectively to achieve accurate communication across language and culture.

In this sense, previous studies by Jimeno Bulnes (2007) and Hale (2007) defended the need of an increasing interaction between Law and Language in order for legal experts to understand the complexities of translation of different concepts between legal systems and countries and thus the responsibility that linguists have.

The latest number of the *Revista de Llengua i Dret - Journal of Language and Law* (December 2017) dedicated to research in jurilinguistics also deserves a special mention. The contributions published in this number defend the importance of jurilinguistics “as a broad, dynamic paradigm which can provide the basis for discussion of the relations between language and the law” (Jiménez Salcedo and Moreno Rivero, 2017: 4). Jurilinguistics helps build bridges between both fields since it is a combined approach to successfully transfer legal content in different languages. This is because, as Engberg defends in his study (2017), jurists use comparative law to give a solution to a legal problem and sometimes they might feel as if there was no possible translation. However, specialised translators use comparative law to find a functional translation of a term that can fit in the target text, which shows that both groups of professionals have different approaches towards the use of comparative law. This means that while a lawyer would use “comparative law techniques”, a linguist would use a “comparative definitions methodology” (Borja Albi and García Izquierdo, 2016). Therefore, Engberg proposes a multi-perspective and conceptual approach to offer “a platform for better understanding of language and meaning between translators and lawyers” (Engberg, 2017: 15). In another study included in this number of the journal, Scott (2017: 57) discusses how the terminology used for and by the legal translation profession “may affect perceived status, professionalisation, empowerment, and even remuneration.”

Some examples of projects that try to combine the work of translators and professionals from the legal field are also worth mentioning. One teaching innovation project introduced at the University of Granada, which was entitled *Perspectiva práctica de la traducción, interpretación y aplicación del derecho extranjero* [Practical perspective of translation, interpreting,

and the application of foreign law], allowed students from the Degree in Law and the Degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies to work together to complete a translation project (Way, 2002). Another EC-funded project called *Training action for legal practitioners: linguistic skills and translation in EU competition law* has the aim of improving the language skills of judges and raising their awareness of problems relating to multilingualism in the EU. This will contribute to increase the uniform and coherent application of EU competition law by judges (University of Insubria, 2018). This is because, as Font i Mas (2017) explains, even though when judges apply EU legislation that has been translated into their language we must assume that they are working with the same notions, it must be considered that the legal terms or drafting used in the translation may lead to a different application according to the interpretation done in each language. Therefore, a higher competence in English can help judges refer to the version in English, which is for the most part the drafting language, and interpret legislation accordingly when doubts arise. The research group MIRAS from the Autonomous University of Barcelona also conducts research in the field of legal interpreting and has a project funded by the Spanish government on the quality of translation as guarantee factor in criminal processes to develop resources for judicial interpreters that work with Romanian, Arabian, Chinese, French and English (MIRAS, 2016).

In a recent qualitative study (Alcalde and Pajares, 2017a), we sought to establish the level of familiarisation with the work of translators and interpreters among students following a Master's Degree in Legal Studies. Since results revealed a very low level of familiarisation with the profession of translators and interpreters, some teaching activities were included in the English course to help to raise awareness of the importance of languages and collaboration with professional linguists in this field. After these activities and even participating as interpreters in a mock trial, students were able to identify the main features of this profession. Moreover, in another study (2017b) we analysed the number of courses of foreign languages in the curriculum of Law Studies in the five highest-ranked universities in Spain, France, UK and Ireland, which showed that it is not common to include this kind of courses in legal studies. Nevertheless, as Scott (2016) states, "legal educators have now joined forces with language and translation faculties to provide ground-breaking programs which are going from strength to strength". Therefore, we concluded that more courses in languages in Law Schools would not only allow students to develop communicative competence in other languages, but would also help them to become aware of the terminological difficulties arising from differences in the legal systems of each country and of the importance of working jointly with specialized translation and interpretation professionals in this field.

3. Methodology

Analysing how academic institutions organise their syllabuses and include language and translation as cross-disciplinary fields was just the first step of our research. With this idea, we considered that analysing the real situation of legal practitioners, what they know about

translators and interpreters and how they perceived their education at university was a key aspect. For this reason, we prepared an online questionnaire entitled *Conocimiento y percepción del papel de los traductores e intérpretes en el ámbito legal español* (Knowledge and perception of the role played by translators and interpreters in the legal field in Spain) focused on the following hypotheses:

- H1.** Legal practitioners consider their university education and training regarding foreign languages and legal systems is not enough.
- H2.** Legal practitioners do not know how translators and interpreters work and how they can be useful for their profession.

This empiric research aimed at gathering quantitative data on the current perspectives of legal practitioners in Spain. Regarding the sample, only legal professionals and law students were allowed to take part in this study. A total of 121 professionals completed this questionnaire. As it was anonymous, the only way to confirm that participants were legal students or practitioners was using a question in which they had to check their level of studies and their current professions. Only three participants chose the option 'Other' and specified that they were students from other fields. In this case, their answers were deleted and not considered for the study. Although the number of participants was not too high, we consider that the answers that we gathered were very relevant for our study, since they come from a sample of legal students and professionals exercising in Spain which, as we will analyse in the following sections, share the same ideas regarding the topics proposed. The questionnaire was created using the Google Forms application. All the information was stored in Google Drive and only the authors had access to it to ensure confidentiality. The form was available only in Spanish (Figure 1) and it was open from the 15th December 2017 to the 28th January 2018. It was divided in four different parts: introduction, academic and professional details, law and translation, and law and languages.

To distribute the survey, we emailed different institutions and professionals received private messages describing our study and asking for collaboration. We also published short messages on professional networks such as LinkedIn, professional pages of Facebook, etc.

Regarding the survey, we followed certain basic guidelines proposed by Aparicio et al. (2009). In this sense, as an introduction to it we included the title, description and purpose of our research. The names of the universities involved were also specified to ensure that the form was seen as an academic and professional research study. Only 16 questions were given to participants since a higher number of options would have reduced the number of participants. The total time required to complete this form was 9 minutes. As for the type of questions that were included, 10 were multiple-choice questions and 6 were open questions to be responded with short descriptions or opinions. With regard to the content of the survey, questions from the first part were related to participants' academic and professional details. The

second part included questions about their level of command of foreign languages and where they had studied them and if they had taken courses in comparative law. The third and final part was based on participants' awareness of the profession of translators and interpreters.

4. Analysis of results

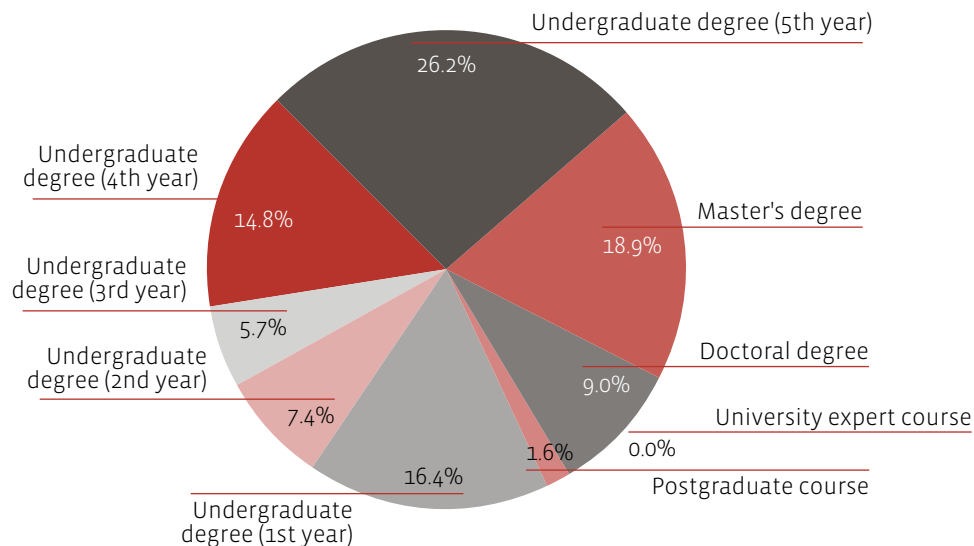
As described above, a total of 121 participants completed our questionnaire. The analysis of the results¹ was conducted according to the two hypotheses that were established and a first section was added to describe the academic and professional profile of our respondents. Since some of the questions included the possibility of adding qualitative data, these were classified according to contents of units grouped in different analytic categories, as done in a previous study by Roskosa and Rupniece (2016).

4.1. Academic and professional details

First of all, regarding the respondents' level of studies, nine different options were proposed bearing in mind the old and the new education system implemented in Spain after the Bologna Process (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Studies completed by the participants



1 Respondents' answers were all in Spanish and the English version shown in tables and figures is the authors' translation.

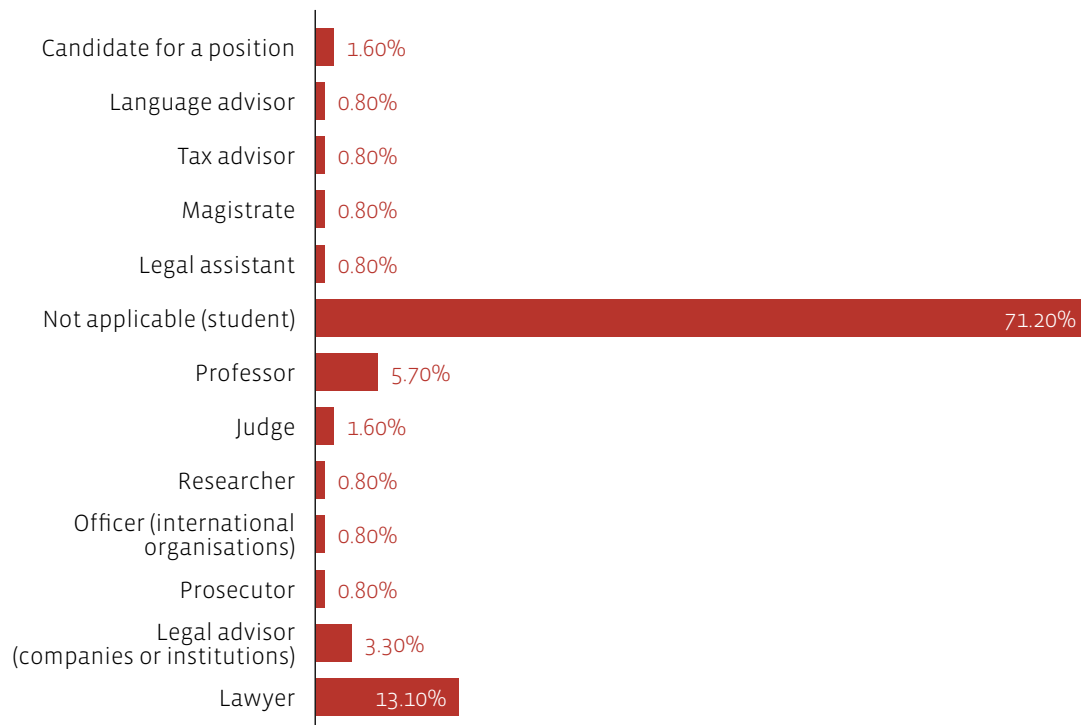
As described in Figure 1, most of the participants graduated in Law in the old Spanish system (26.2%). We can confirm this since it was a five-year degree converted into a four-year degree which is currently being offered at Spanish universities. The second group is made up of holders of a master's degree in Law (18.9%). The third group is composed of law students who have completed their first year (16.4%). Graduates in Law in the new system (14.8%) are the next category with more participants. Doctors of Law represent 9.0% of the participants while the others are undergraduate students or postgraduate students (different from master's degrees).

On the one hand, with regard to their current profession, 77% of the participants were not practising. Considering the negative answers, we can state that participants were divided into five groups: undergraduate students (37.23%), graduates (45.74%, being 26.50% graduates from the old system and 19.24% from the new system), master's graduates (13.83%), doctoral graduates (2.13%) and other postgraduates (1.06%).

On the other hand, according to the results, 23% of participants were currently exercising as legal professionals. This percentage can be divided into different groups: undergraduate students (3.70%), graduates (25.93% from the old system), master's graduates (37.04%), doctoral graduates (29.63%) and other postgraduates (3.70%). Those who answered positively can be classified in three main groups: students (71.20%), lawyers (13.10%) and professors (5.70%) (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Positions held by the participants who answered positively

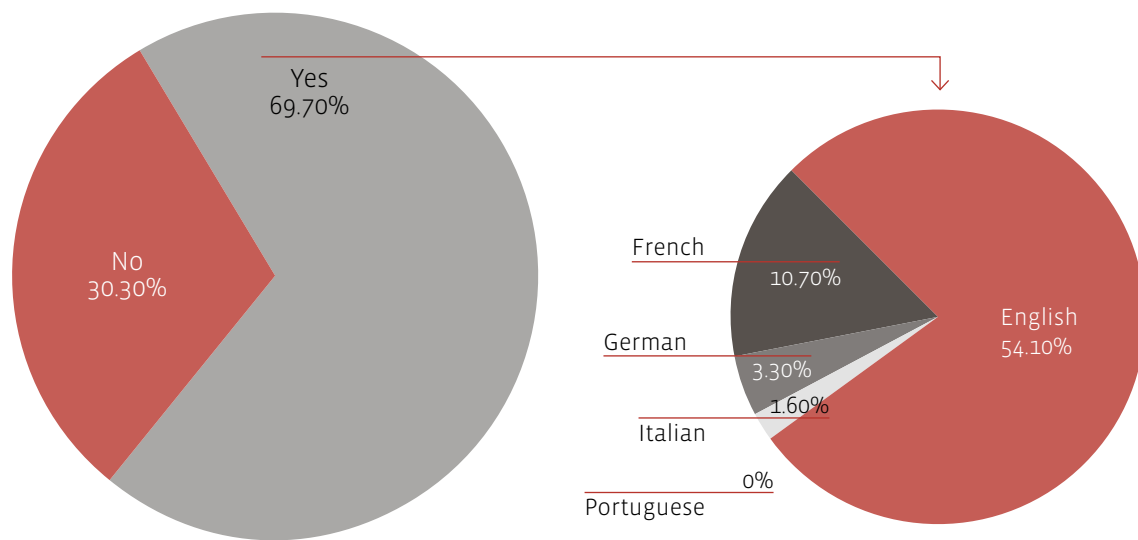


4.2. First hypothesis: Law and languages

For the first hypothesis, when respondents were asked if they had taken or completed a general language course, according to the results, the main language studied is English (54.10%), followed by French (10.70%) and German (3.30%) (Figure 3). In general we can state that Spanish syllabuses include general language courses covering languages which are close to Spain and have an historical and cultural background related to our legal culture.

FIGURE 3

General language courses studied



However, only 14.80% of the participants confirmed that they took translation courses while they were studying. Moreover, according to the data provided, only 18.90% confirmed these courses were part of their official syllabuses. Most of them were from the same university while other Spanish syllabuses have also been reported. Just a few cases of foreign universities are included. However, it needs to be said that these percentages only refer to language courses since no translation courses are being offered as part of the syllabuses of Law Studies created so far (Figure 4). This means that respondents probably considered a translation course part of a language course, due again to a lack of knowledge of what learning to translate implies.

In relation to comparative law courses, results showed that 42.6% of the participants had studied comparative law at university. This means that most of them did not learn a foreign legal system and, therefore, no foreign languages were taught.

When asked if they thought Law degrees in Spain offered enough language courses, as we can see in Figure 5, more than half of the respondents strongly disagreed with this question, while only 2.5% agreed.

FIGURE 4

Syllabuses involved in the language and translation courses taken

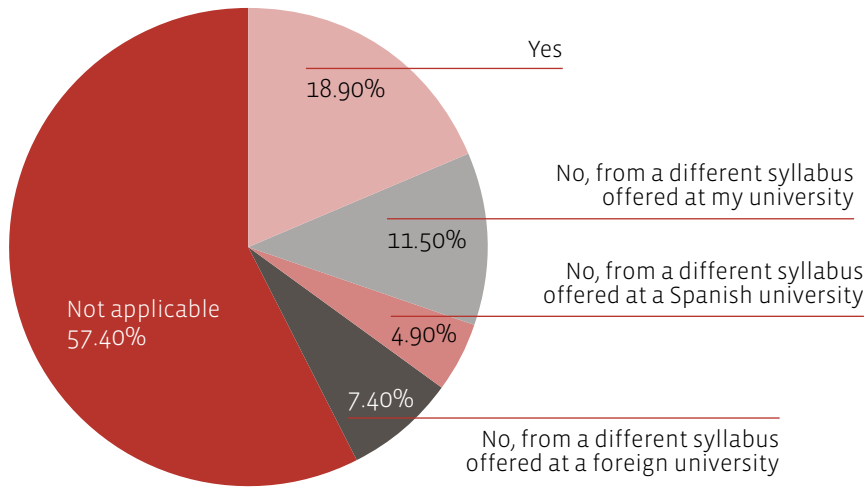
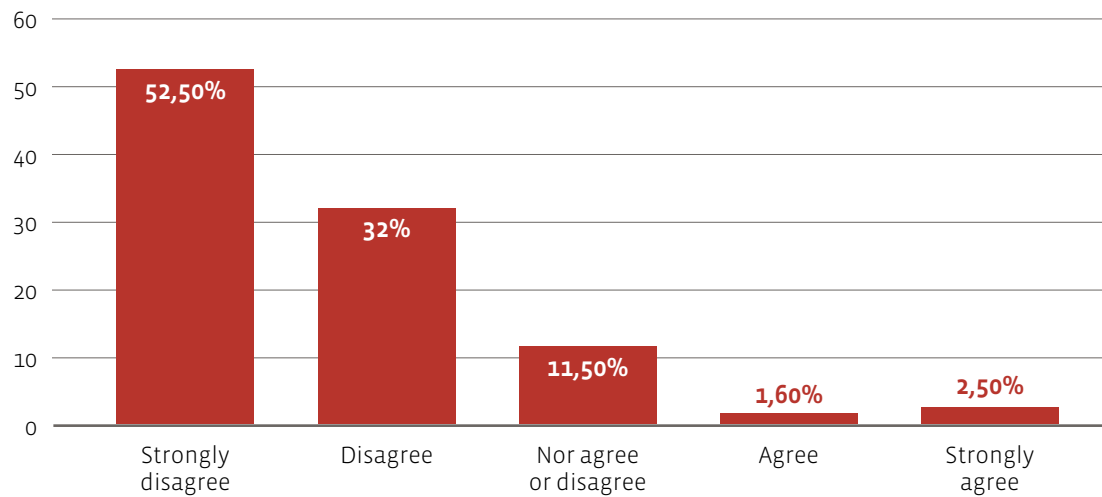


FIGURE 5

Distribution of opinions regarding language courses offered in Law Studies in Spain (Likert scale)

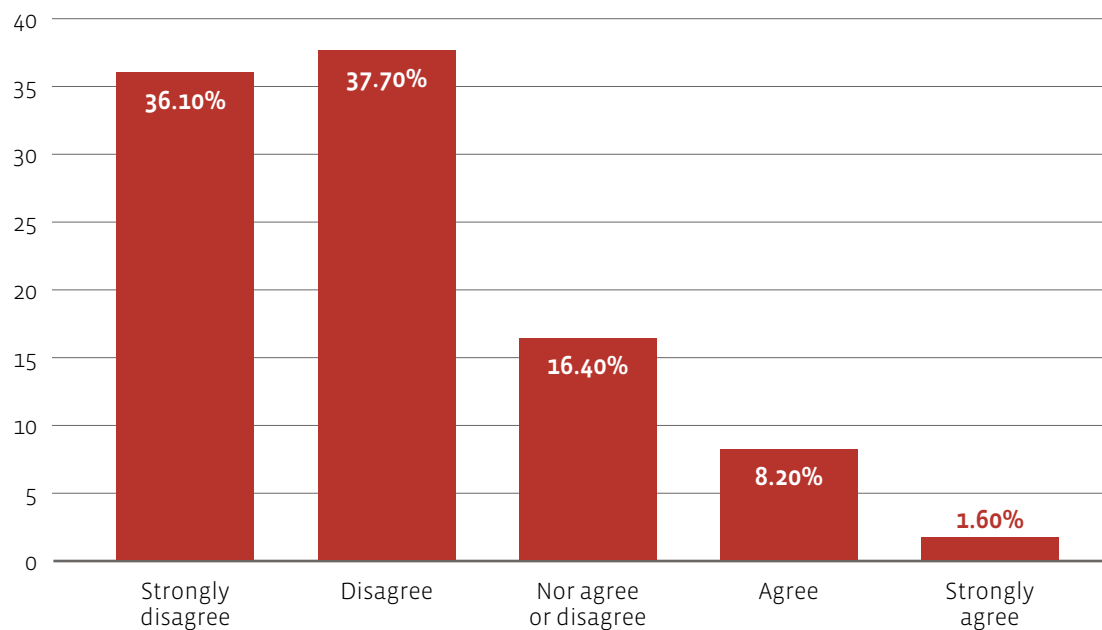


When asked the same question but in relation to professional associations or institutions, results show that a higher percentage thought these offered more legal language courses than universities (Figure 6), but still not enough.

As a conclusion for this first part of the questionnaire and in relation to our first hypothesis in which we stated that legal practitioners consider that their university training and education regarding foreign languages and education is not enough, we can see first of all that a high percentage received some kind of training in at least one foreign language during their studies. However, not even a quarter of the respondents had taken a translation course before and it

FIGURE 6

Distribution of opinions regarding language courses applied to Law Studies in Spain (Likert scale)



seems that a distinction between a translation and a language course was not clear to them. Respondents also believe that languages are not sufficiently emphasised in legal studies at university settings. Therefore, these answers corroborate our first hypothesis, since they show that even though there is a certain offer of languages as part of Law degrees, respondents consider that they are not strongly emphasised at university level. These results are in line with the above mentioned study by Jimeno Bulnes (2007), in which she defended the need to promote further interaction between Law and Language and the promotion of at least basic linguistic training in linguistic spheres. This will lead to what Hale (2007) reported in her study as a better understanding by legal experts of the responsibility of linguists since they will be able to observe the complexities of language and the translation of concepts between different legal systems.

4.3. Second hypothesis: awareness of the profession of translators and interpreters

When asked if as law students they had ever been informed about the role of sworn translators and interpreters, results show that 68% of the participants had never been informed about the role of these professionals.

Regarding the questions of why sworn translators and interpreters are normally needed for, since this was an open question, several answers were received. 21 participants answered negatively while 21 did it positively and just 1 chose the option of 'maybe'. The rest of the re-

spondents answered with short sentences describing different situations. We have classified the different answers according to the different units of contents which have been grouped under categories of analysis.

TABLE 1

Category of analysis: Translation of legal documents or in legal settings

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
TRANSLATION OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS OR IN LEGAL SETTINGS
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To translate documents from the legal field. (4) - To translate any legal procedures and documents that may be required if someone does not speak the language of the court. (4) - To translate official documents. (4) - To write judgements and legal texts. - To translate documents that may be required in comparative law. - To translate legal texts into other languages. - To translate specialised documents. - To translate foreign regulations or laws to be applied to the Spanish legal system.

TABLE 2

Category of analysis: Translation and interpreting in legal settings

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING IN LEGAL SETTINGS
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To take part as translators and interpreters in international issues. (6) - To interpret and translate evidence and any documents that may be required by a judge. (3) - To translate written and oral texts in legal procedures. (2) - To interpret and translate in the legal field bearing in mind its specialised terminology and contexts which do require special translations.

TABLE 3

Category of analysis: Helping people who speak a different language in legal procedures

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
HELPING PEOPLE WHO SPEAK A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE IN LEGAL PROCEDURES
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To ensure the effective protection of the court to all the parties involved. (6) - To ensure that foreigners who do not speak Spanish can understand and interact in trials and legal procedures. (5)

- To ensure that the right to be understood and understand others is protected for all the individuals involved. (4)
- If someone does not speak Spanish, they have the right to be assisted by an interpreter or translator to ensure that they can communicate effectively. (2)
- To ensure that the communication between legal practitioners is always maintained. (2)
- To help foreigners (I am from Rumania) who must appear before a court and are always questioned by judges or the lawyers who speak in an incomprehensible language. For this reason, they never answer or, if so, they say something which is not related to the questions posed.
- To assist other professionals who do not speak a foreign language, especially in criminal procedures.
- To help foreigners, issue apostilles, validate foreign documents, etc.
- To take part in legal procedures in which legal practitioners and legal systems from different countries are involved.

TABLE 4

Category of analysis: Official translation

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS OFFICIAL TRANSLATION
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To certify the validity of a translation. (5) - Give legal effect to a foreign document. (4) - To ensure that translations are true and faithful. (3) - To give legal effects to any documents translated from a language into Spanish. (2) - They are essential to ensure that documents are translated properly. - To certify the validity of a translation if it is to be used in a trial.

As we can see in Table 1 and 2, some answers were accurate regarding the profession but some of them were very specific and did not provide a global perspective of what sworn translators do. Some answers included the social part of helping people in legal procedures as shown in Table 3, but in this case some of the answers were again very vague or completely wrong about it (e.g. issuing apostilles). Finally, as we can observe in Table 4, some answers attributed some tasks to sworn translators that are carried out by jurists, showing again a low level of familiarisation with the profession.

When asked about the difference between a translator and an interpreter, 50 participants did not know the difference while 50 did know. Some of them specified certain aspects which will be analysed later. As in the previous question, answers were classified according to different categories (see Table 5 and 6).

Moreover, when asked about the difference between a sworn and a legal translator, results show that 68 of our respondents did not know the difference. However, we gathered different answers that were also categorised (see Table 7, 8 and 9).

TABLE 5

Category of analysis: Difference in written (translation) and oral (interpreting) format

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
DIFFERENCE IN WRITTEN (TRANSLATION) AND ORAL (INTERPRETING) FORMAT
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translators work with written documents while interpreters with oral texts. (49) - Translators translate and interpreters interpret. (2) - Translators translate legal documents while interpreters transcribe and interpret. - Translators work with written documents while interpreters work with oral texts and gestures. - Translators translate and interpreters express the meaning of a conversation. - Translators only translate.

TABLE 6

Category of analysis: Work methodology

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
WORK METHODOLOGY
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translators only transform words from a language into another language so that messages can be understood literally. Interpreters take into account the context in which messages are produced to understand the intention of the person producing the message and to transmit what they mean but not literally (e.g. considering certain aspects such as irony, double sense, etc.). (6) - Translators do not know the laws or mechanisms required to understand and interact in a trial and, therefore, their translations are not true and faithful. - Translators are more formal and must always demonstrate that they are duly trained and prepared while interpreters do not need any formal education or training. - Translators work with languages and interpreters with sign languages. - Translators focus on linguistics while interpreters focus on verbal and non-verbal aspects. - One of them translates literally while the other translates everything. - Translators are officially appointed while interpreters are those who know a language and certify that they can interpret a conversation in detail. - Translators are objective and interpreters subjective. - Translators translate and interpreters interpret but give their own opinions at the same time.

TABLE 7

Category of analysis: Official translation

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
OFFICIAL TRANSLATION
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal translators are specialised in legal jargon while sworn translators in certified translations. (11) - Only sworn translators can translate documents officially. (3)

- Sworn translators are like notaries but for languages. (2)
- Only sworn translators can translate, sign and stamp documents officially.
- Sworn translators certify their translations and are therefore responsible for any actions derived from their work. I have never heard about legal translators but they may be related to other legal fields.

TABLE 8

Category of analysis: Texts they translate

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS TEXTS THEY TRANSLATE
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal translators only translate legal documents while sworn translators translate documents of any kind. (12) - Legal translators focus on texts while sworn translators focus on legal texts to be used in trials. (3) - Legal translators translate legal documents while sworn translators are appointed by a state institution. (2) - Legal translators translate documents in the legal field while sworn translators interpret and translate in trials and courts. - Sworn translators do not translate. They carry out other tasks. - Legal translators focus on legal documents while sworn translators establish a relationship between public authorities, citizens and justice. - Legal translators translate regulations and legislation (e.g. EU law) from other languages into their native language while sworn translators do the same but into foreign languages. - A legal translator translates documents from the legal field while sworn translators translate texts required for or by a court.

TABLE 9

Category of analysis: Training and education

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
UNITS OF CONTENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal translators are law graduates who have a good command of a foreign language or translators who have specialised in legal translation. Sworn translators are professionals appointed by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. (4) - Legal translators are specialised in legal terminology while sworn translators are legal translators who work independently and are not influenced by the decisions or contexts involved. (2) - Sworn translators must pass an official examination to be appointed. - Legal translators have been duly trained and educated at university while sworn translators not.

As we can see in Table 5, some answers were highly inaccurate regarding the difference between a translator and an interpreter (e.g. interpreters work with gestures, interpreters transcribe), but a high number of answers were correct. Regarding the second and third category

(Table 6 and 7), answers varied but showed again a very low level of familiarisation with the profession (e.g. translators are more formal, translators do not know the laws, sworn translators are like notaries but for languages). The category related to the texts they translate also gathers incorrect answers (Table 8) and the same applies to the training and education of these professionals (Table 9).

Finally, when asked if there were any regulations governing the work carried out by sworn translators and interpreters, results show that 77 respondents did not know and 8 did know and 17 thought there was a specific regulation but they were not sure. Other answers that we gathered were the following:

TABLE 10

Category of analysis: Spanish legislation

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
SPANISH LEGISLATION

UNITS OF CONTENT

- Legislation regulated by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. (2)
- There is a law that established that they have to pass an official examination. (2)
- Several laws such as Law 1/1996 and Law 1/2000 state that interpreters are required for certain procedures. However, I do not know if there are specific regulations for them.
- Their profession is regulated by royal decrees.
- Their profession is regulated by an organic law.
- Their functions are regulated by the Sixteenth Additional Provision of Law 2/2014 on the Services and Actions Taken by the State Abroad.
- General regulations in the Region of Madrid.
- Order AEC/2125/2014.

TABLE 11

Category of analysis: Unknown regulation

CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS
UNKNOWN REGULATION

UNITS OF CONTENT

- Yes, but I do not know since I have not been informed about them when I was at university. (2)
- I think there is a specific regulation but I am not sure. Once I read that Spain had not enough sworn interpreters for certain languages and that was a problem for our legal system. I know that an official appointment is required but the requirements are quite general and no quality can be guaranteed.
- I do not know but there are some websites used by courts where we can find these professionals.
- I do not remember but there was national legislation, EU legislation and international agreements.
- There are certain regulations and they must be registered in their professional association.
- This profession is regulated by each country and I suppose a general regulation should be applied for international cases.
- I think the EU has a regulation concerning these professionals.

Although some answers were correct or at least showed a certain level of accuracy (e.g. Order AEC/2125/2014, There is a law that established that they have to pass an official examination, see Table 10), others were completely wrong (e.g. General regulations in the Region of Madrid) or very vague or wrong (Table 11).

As a conclusion for our second hypothesis, in which we stated that legal practitioners do not know how translators and interpreters work and how they can be useful for the profession, the results of the survey corroborate it too. First of all, 60% of our respondents had never been informed during their law studies about the role of translators and interpreters. When asked about what sworn translators do, answers were very different too, although the level of accuracy was higher compared to the answers about what the differences between the role of translators and interpreters or between legal and sworn translators were. Regarding the requirements that an interpreter must meet to work in a trial, a high percentage did not know and those who gave answers were not completely accurate. This again shows a lack of knowledge about the profession and it could partly be due to the fact that a high number of respondents had never worked in collaboration with them. These results are in line with what previous studies have already stated. As shown in the section of literature review, Way (2016) stated that people are usually unaware of the existence of legal translators unless they have needed their services before, and Scott (2017) also referred to the problem of law status and visibility issues. Moreover, this author also mentioned the variety of descriptors to name these specialized linguists as a problem related to the lack of familiarity with the profession. Therefore, we believe that, as Bestué defended in her study (2009), a closer collaboration between jurists and linguists would result in a better understanding of the translation profession and, as Townsly (2011) also stated, this would set the ground for a more effective cooperation between them. In this sense, academia can be a good starting point and therefore more research and teaching innovation projects as the ones mentioned before would be fundamental to lay the seeds for more interaction, cooperation, understanding and interdisciplinary work between both fields.

5. Conclusions

This empirical study has sought to establish the level of familiarisation with the work of translators and interpreters among legal experts. Our aim was to analyse the current situation in Spain to raise awareness of the importance of languages and collaboration with professional linguists in this field. As stated in the preliminary literature review of the topic, it became evident that despite the increasing number of court cases and legal decisions that affect different countries and which imply the need of translation and interpreting, this profession does not have full recognition among legal experts. Indeed, the results of our questionnaire have shown that jurists were unaware of the differences between legal and sworn translation and interpreting, nor were they clear over the regulatory framework for that profession. They

also considered that the language courses that are offered in combination with legal subjects in Law degrees in our country are not enough. Therefore, both hypothesis established in our study were corroborated. In this sense, we consider that even though a proficient command of a language might not be required in the legal field, legal experts should at least be aware of the importance that it might have in certain cases. Translation and interpreting services are not always necessary in trials, but they should be prepared for situations when they are and know what steps to take. Therefore, further interdisciplinary collaboration should be enhanced at university settings so that trainees both in Translation and Law realise how this collaboration could lead towards improvements in the rights of people likely to benefit from their skills.

6. References

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