An examination of the accreditation process for sworn translators–interpreters in Spain

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Abstract

The figure of the sworn translator–interpreter has a long tradition in Spain and has been approached from a wide variety of perspectives within academic literature. The fact that no licence or qualification is required to work as a translator or interpreter makes accreditation as a sworn translator–interpreter a valuable upgrade for T&I graduates, as it is a requirement to be allowed to provide sworn translations and interpreting services. The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation is in charge of organising accreditation exams, which have been criticised for their design, format and transparency (Way, 2003; Vigier Moreno, 2010; Ordóñez López, 2009). This criticism, as well as the extremely low percentages of candidates who obtain accreditation (ranging from 0.3% to 4.4% in the last four examination sessions) make this analysis particularly timely. In this paper, the accreditation process is examined taking into account the concept of legal translator's competence (e.g. Borja, 2005; Prieto Ramos, 2011), the professional reality of sworn translators–interpreters and T&I degree programmes at Spanish universities.

Keywords: sworn translators–interpreters, official examinations, legal translators' competence, translators training programmes.

1. Introduction

In Spain, sworn translators and interpreters have the necessary accreditation to provide official translations and interpreting services. Given that translation and interpreting are not regulated professions in Spain and no licence or qualification is required to carry them out, obtaining a professional accreditation seems to be a way of gaining socio-professional status and increasing opportunities for work. Indeed, students who are completing translation and interpreting (T&I) degrees are often interested in this accreditation.

In order to be accredited as sworn translators–interpreters[1], candidates must pass the corresponding examinations. The requirements for sitting these exams are relatively simple (see Section 3); however, there has long been a certain degree of opacity regarding the details of the examination process, as noted by scholars such as Way (2003) and Ordóñez López (2009). Recently, there have been efforts to make this process more transparent. For instance, previous exams have been made available on the webpage of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (MAEC) although accessing information on

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[1] This is the official title (https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2009-20767).

assessment criteria and instructions for the different exams is still far from straightforward. It is also noteworthy that Spanish universities do not offer any specific training for these examinations[2].

As Vigier Moreno notes (2010: 35–38), several scholars have questioned the adequacy and format of the exams, claiming that they focus on candidates' linguistic competence but fail to evaluate their competences as translators and interpreters. This claim is especially significant given that obtaining this accreditation will entitle candidates to offer official translations and interpreting services even though they are not required to hold a degree in T&I.

This paper, after a brief description of the accreditation process and a review of the applicable legislation, analyses the current examinations, taking into consideration issues such as legal translator's competence, the professional reality of sworn translators–interpreters and the skills and content covered in T&I degree programmes at Spanish universities. This multi-parameter analysis will reveal whether (and to what extent) the aspects mentioned above are interconnected, which, in turn, will determine the degree of adequacy of the accreditation exams.

2. Sworn translators–interpreters in Spain

Sworn translators–interpreters are professionals who have been accredited by the MAEC[3] to provide official translations and interpreting services between Spanish and a foreign language. They are accredited to translate and interpret both from and into the foreign language for which they have been appointed. This accreditation was created to facilitate communication between Spain and the 'New World' and has evolved over the centuries[4].

Sworn translators–interpreters are authorised to certify the veracity/authenticity of their translations ; sworn translations have the same legal effect as their originals and can be used for judicial and administrative purposes. Sworn translations must bear the translator's signature and professional stamp, and sworn translators–interpreters must certify the faithfulness of their translations by adding a validation statement specified by the MAEC[5]. Every year the MAEC publishes an updated register of sworn translators–interpreters, including their working languages, contact details and the way they were accredited (by passing the corresponding exams or by having their T&I university degree or equivalent European accreditations recognised).

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[2] The FIDESCU Foundation offers a preparation course for some languages (http://www.fidescu.org/oferta-academica/traduccion/preparacion-para-el-examen-de-traductor-interprete-jurado).

[3] For a comparative analysis of the figure of sworn translator-interpreters and the accreditation process among Europe see Pym et al. (2012).

[4] For a thorough review of the history of sworn translators-interpreters accreditation, see Peñarroja (2004).

[5] For a detailed description of the most common translation methods and techniques and the formatting and style guidelines most commonly used, see Vigier Moreno (2010: 51-57).

Professional accreditation of sworn translators–interpreters is regulated by the legislation governing the Language Interpretation Office (OIL)[6], which was established in 1977 replacing the Language Interpretation Secretary, funded in 1527. Some amendments have been made in the last decade. Following Royal Decree 2002/2009, of 23 December 2009, the title has changed from "sworn interpreter" to "sworn translator–interpreter", and the option of recognising T&I university degrees has been unavailable since 30 September 2015. There are currently two ways of attaining accreditation as a sworn translator–interpreter: a) by passing the corresponding examinations; and b) by obtaining recognition of an equivalent professional accreditation granted by any EU or EEA member state following verification of the correspondence between the two accreditations by the MAEC.

Accreditation as a sworn translator–interpreter does not confer on the holder the status of civil servant or establish any professional relationship between the holder and the public administration. Also noteworthy is the fact that Royal Decree RD2002/2009 does not set professional rates, which means that prices of sworn translations and interpretations vary considerably.

3. Accreditation examinations for sworn translators–interpreters

Order AEC/2125/2014, of 6 November 2014 and articles 5 and 6 of Order AEX/1971/2002, of 12 July 2002 set out the regulations governing the accreditation examinations. The following aspects are regulated:

a) Requirements: potential candidates must be of legal age; be a Spanish national or a national of any EU or EEA member state; hold a bachelor's degree from a Spanish university or an equivalent foreign degree which has been recognised by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports[7].

b) Organisation of the examinations: according to Spanish Royal Decree 2002/2009, "examinations […] will generally be held once a year as determined by the MAEC; in the event that the previous examination process has not been concluded, or if the MAEC so decides, the interval between examinations can be increased to a maximum of two years"[8].The official announcement must include the following information: application procedure and deadline; languages examined; a list of members of the assessment committee; examination fees; and a list of topics for the exams. Once the application period has ended, an official announcement providing information about the place and date of the examinations as well as the lists of admitted and non-admitted candidates is published on the MAEC's web site and in the Spanish Official Gazette (BOE).

c) Assessment committee: the members of the assessment committee are appointed by the Subsecretary of the MAEC from translators and interpreters who are civil servants in the

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[6] http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/Paginas/Traductoresas---Int%C3%A9rpretes-Juradosas.aspx.

[7] The fact that there is no restriction regarding the area of study has been criticised by scholars such as Vigier Moreno (2010: 35), who argues that this contributes to the lack of recognition and prestige and hinders the professionalization of sworn translators-interpreters.

[8] Our translation.

National Body of Translators and Interpreters. The committee must have an odd number of members, with a minimum of three. The decisions and resolutions of the assessment committee can be appealed against as established by Law 30/1992, of 26 November 1992.

d) Examinations: according to Order AEC/2125/2014, of 6 November 2014, there are three exams. Candidates must pass each exam to be allowed to sit the following one.

1) The first exam is a multiple-choice test, in Spanish, with questions about grammar, terminology and the legal content included in the list of topics published in the corresponding announcement. This test is assessed on a pass/fail basis. Once results have been published, the date for the second exam is announced.

2) The second exam comprises three tests, which are assessed on a pass/fail basis.

> i) In the first test, candidates must translate a non-specialised journalistic or literary text or essay from the language for which they aim to be accredited into Spanish, without access to a dictionary.
> ii) In the second test, candidates must translate a non-specialised journalistic or literary text or essay, written in Spanish, into the language for which they aim to be accredited, without access to a dictionary.
> iii) In the third test, candidates must translate a legal or economic text from the language for which they aim to be accredited into English. In this test, the use of print dictionaries is permitted, but electronic dictionaries are not.

3) The third examination is a consecutive interpretation, followed by a conversation with the candidate, in the language of accreditation, if deemed necessary by the assessment committee.

The assessment criteria for the exams are published before they take place. With regards to the languages examined, according to Royal Decree 2002/2009, of 23 December 2009, examinations can be taken for any of the official languages of EU member states and candidate states as well as UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese and Russian); nevertheless, whether exams are organised depends on the availability of qualified examiners for the corresponding languages.

4. A critical review of the examinations

According to the information published by the MAEC[9], 1,503 candidates were admitted to the examinations for accreditation as sworn translators–interpreters in the last four sessions[10], of which only 4.4% in 2015, 4% in 2016, 0.3% in 2017 and 3.9% in 2018 achieved accreditation. These percentages are extremely low, which raises some questions about the design, adequacy and degree of exigency of the examinations.

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[9]http://administracion.gob.es/pagFront/empleoBecas/empleo/buscadorEmpleo.htm.
[10]In 2015 409 candidates were admitted to the accreditation examinations, 301 in 2016, 614 in 2017 and 179 in 2018.

Having a bachelor's degree in T&I is not an entry requirement, as noted above. However, while it might be expected that candidates with a T&I degree will find the exams less challenging as they are likely to have acquired the necessary translation and interpreting skills[11], none of the undergraduate degrees currently offered at Spanish universities includes specific preparation for these examinations.

As mentioned in the introduction, some scholars have claimed that the examinations fail to evaluate the necessary competences for sworn translators–interpreters, observing that both their design and the conditions under which they are taken have little to do with the working reality of translators and interpreters (cf. Vigier Moreno, 2010: 35–38). Since Vigier Moreno's 2010 study, some changes have been made in the design of the examinations: candidates are now tested for legal knowledge and an interpreting examination was added by Order AEC/2125/2014, of 6 of November 2014. Nevertheless, according to the instructions provided, access to resources is still very restricted.

The following sections contain a critical analysis of the examinations, based on the last four examination sessions (2015–2018) for the first exam, which all candidates must take and pass in order to proceed to the next exam, regardless of the language for which they are seeking accreditation. For the other exams, the analysis focuses on the 2017 examination session[12] as this was the only year in this period in which accreditation examinations for English were offered.

4.1. Translator competence in the area of legal translation

Legal translator competence overlaps considerably with non-specialised translator competence (cf. PACTE, 2017; Kelly, 2007, 2008; EMT, 2017) but work on the area of legal translation highlight its specific nature and emphasise the role played by the thematic (including both legal and textual knowledge) and instrumental subcompetences.

According to Šarčević (1997; 113–114), "if translators are to make legal as well as linguistic decisions, they must be competent in both translation and law". Borja Albi (2005) distinguishes two types of competences required for legal translation: "extralinguistic competence", which includes encyclopaedic knowledge, knowledge of translation theory, legal knowledge of both source and target legal systems, knowledge of comparative and international law and participation in the experiences of the community of jurists[13] (Borja Albi, 2005: 51); and "transfer (textual) competence", defined as "the capacity to understand and reformulate texts, taking into consideration the purpose of the translation and the characteristics of the addressee"[14] (Borja Albi, 2005: 53).

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[11]According to Vigier Moreno (2010: 499), who examines the degree of perceived adequacy of the training received for the practice of sworn translation and interpreting by T&I graduates from five Spanish universities who obtained accreditation via recognition of their studies, more than 76% of the students were satisfied with the training received for sworn translation, whereas 60% were not satisfied with their training for sworn interpreting.

[12] https://boe.es/boe/dias/2017/03/13/pdfs/BOE-A-2017-2705.pdf.

[13]Our translation.

[14]Our translation.

Cao (2007: 41) proposes a translation competence model which consists of three subcompetences: "translational knowledge competence", "translational strategic competence" and "translational knowledge structures"; the latter are defined as "the knowledge that is essential to achieve interlingual and intercultural communication in translation" (2007: 44) and include general, specialist, and literary knowledge (Cao, 2007: 44).

Prieto Ramos's (2011) model consists of the combination of five subcompetences:

> 1. Strategic or methodological competence, which controls the application of the other skills and comprises: analysis of translation briefs, macrocontextualization and general work planning, identification of problems and implementation of transfer strategies (translation procedures), decision-making argumentation, self-assessment and quality control […].
> 2. Communicative and textual competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, including knowledge of linguistic variants, registers, specialized legal linguistic uses and legal genre conventions.
> 3. Thematic and cultural competence: knowledge of legal systems, hierarchy of legal sources, branches of law and main legal concepts; awareness of asymmetry between legal notions and structures in different legal traditions.
> 4. Instrumental competence (documentation and technology): knowledge of specialized sources, information and terminology management, use of parallel documents, application of computer tools to translation.
> 5. Interpersonal and professional management competence: teamwork, interaction with clients and other professionals, knowledge of legal framework for professional practice and fiscal obligations, deontological aspects. (Prieto Ramos, 2011: 12)

Finally, the hermeneutic model put forward by Piecychna (2013) comprises four subcompetences:

> •*Psychological sub-competence*: self-reflection upon one's own skills and knowledge; reflection upon one's own cultural and social position as a legal translator; acceptance of one's own limitations and possible lack of skills or knowledge; acceptance of the subjective nature of the translational process; self-criticism; self-motivation; willingness to develop one's own knowledge; willingness to pursue a career as a legal translator; attitude towards translation work; being a responsible, curious, patient, creative, hard-working, diligent, methodical, devoted, and imaginative person; the ability to identify and solve problems with appropriate strategies and techniques; the ability to analyze and *interpret* texts.
> • *Thematic sub-competence*: understanding and knowledge of the differences between various legal systems and legal cultures; the ability to compare various foreign legal systems with reference to the specificity of the translation task; *understanding* and knowledge of different sub-fields of law, such as civil law, criminal law, family law, international law, trade law, etc.; the ability to *interpret* and analyze a legal text.
> •*Textual sub-competence*: knowledge of the typology of legal texts, legal genre conventions, legal terminology conceptualization, legal text register, legal text predicative mode and form; knowledge of formatting conventions; knowledge of legal text functions in specialist communication; the ability to *interpret* and analyze a legal text.
> •*Linguistic sub-competence*: knowledge of source and target languages in terms of grammar, lexis, stylistics, punctuation, spelling; knowledge of source and target legal language for specific purposes. (Piecychna, 2013: 154)

The analysis carried out in the following sections will use/be based on Prieto Ramos' (2011) model.

4.2. Examining the examinations

4.2.1. First exam

As noted above, the first exam, which is the same for all candidates regardless of their language combination, is a multiple choice test with a total of 55 questions on Spanish language and law. According to the instructions provided, in this exam candidates may not use any kind of reference material. In order to pass, candidates must obtain a minimum of 25 points; each correct question scores one point and, depending on the assessment criteria established for each examination session, points are deducted for incorrect and/or unanswered questions (0.5 or 0.25)[15]. The duration of these tests is one hour and fifteen minutes. Regarding the competences presented in the previous section, this exam evaluates the candidates' communicative and textual competence (their linguistic skills in Spanish) and their thematic and cultural competence (their legal knowledge) (Prieto Ramos, 2011: 12).

Examination of the tests from the last four years (2015–2018)[16] provides a thorough picture of the linguistic issues that are usually tested and the degree of complexity of the legal–economic content included in the first exams. Almost half of the questions are dedicated to the Spanish language and the others focus on law. In general, it can be observed that a very good command of Spanish is required, something which would be expected of professional translators, and a considerably wide variety of legal topics and areas are covered. Figure 1 shows the proportion of questions aimed at testing knowledge of different types of linguistic difficulties.

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[15]According to the instructions published, no points were deducted in 2015 for incorrect or unanswered questions. In 2016, and 2017, each incorrect question was penalised with 0.5 points and unanswered questions with 0.25. In 2018, each incorrect question was penalised by 0.25 points and no points were deducted for unanswered questions (the instructions can be found at http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/Paginas/Buscador.aspx).

[16] 2015 Exam:
http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oportun idadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Test%202015.pdf.
2016 Exam:
http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oportun idadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Test%202016.pdf.
2017 Exam:
http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oportun idadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Test%202017.pdf.
2018 Exam:
http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oportun idadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Test%20primer%20ejercicio%202018.pdf.
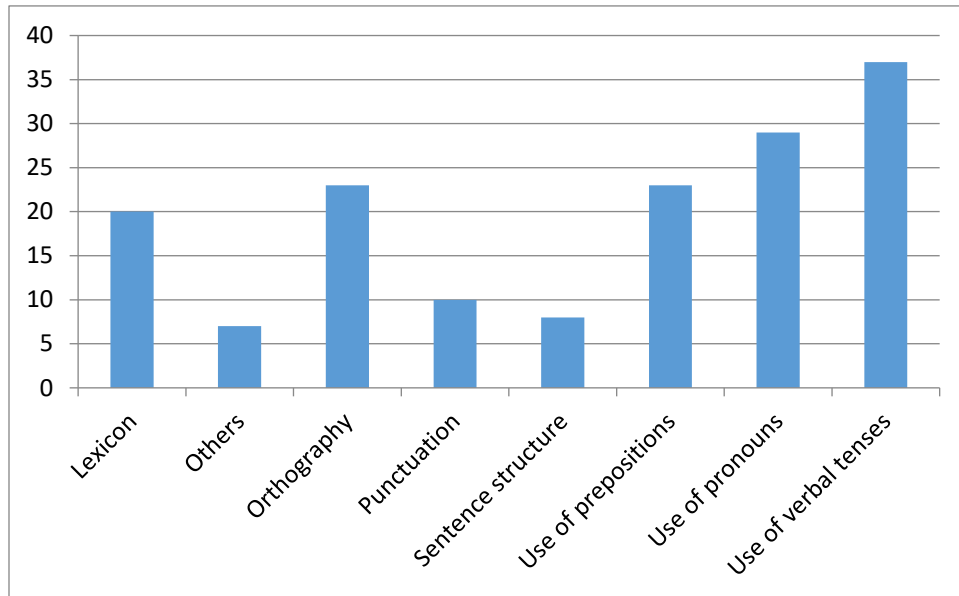
Figure 1: Different types of linguistic difficulties in Spanish

Questions about lexicon mainly include words which tend to be confused (e.g. "hacer de *cicerón*", "hacer de *cicerona*" and "hacer de *cicerone*"[17], question 3, exam session 2017; *infligir* vs *infrigir*, question 12, exam session 2018). Most questions about orthography deal with the normative use of accents, especially cases in which they differentiate between two otherwise homophonous words (e.g. *aun* vs *aún*, question 10, exam session 2015). Punctuation questions mainly tackle the use of commas. In questions about sentence structure, ungrammatical sentence structures are given as choices, e.g. question 51, exam session 2016:

Which of these options is correct[18]?

a) Juan no dice que ni viene ni que va.
b) Juan dice ni que viene ni que va.
c) Juan no dice que ni le viene ni que le va.
d) Juan no dice ni que viene ni que va.

Questions about the use of prepositions frequently include the use of prepositional subordinators, e.g. question 2, exam session 2017:

Which of these sentences is correct[19]?

a) Es posible un envío simbólico de tropas en caso de que Vietnam lo solicite.
b) Es posible un envío simbólico de tropas en caso que Vietnam lo solicite.
c) Es posible un envío simbólico de tropas en el caso que Vietnam lo solicite.
d) Es posible un envío simbólico de tropas caso que Vietnam lo solicite.

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[17] Italics have been added for emphasis.
[18] Correct answer: d
[19] Correct answer: a

This category also includes questions on the use of personal "a", e.g. question 9, exam session 2018[20]:

> Which of the following sentences is correct?
>
> a) Trajeron a una garrafa con ellos.
> b) Se trajeron a una garrafa con ellos.
> c) Trajeron a una garrafa consigo.
> d) None of them is correct.

Questions about the use of pronouns are also quite common and focus on the use of direct and indirect object pronouns and relative pronouns, e.g. questions 3 and 12, exam session 2016:

> Which of these sentences is correct[21]?
>
> a) Falta que *lo* manden la aceptación y que *lo* confirmen el vuelo.
> b) Faltan que *le* manden la aceptación y que *le* confirmen el vuelo.
> c) Falta que *le* manden la aceptación y que *le* confirmen el vuelo.
> d) Faltan que *los* manden la aceptación y que *los* confirmen el vuelo[22].
>
> Which of the following options is correct[23]?
>
> a) Las resoluciones judiciales de este magistrado las cuales van contra los intereses de mi cliente serán inmediatamente recurridas ante la estancia superior.
> b) Las resoluciones judiciales de este magistrado, solo las cuales van contra los intereses de mi cliente, serán inmediatamente recurridas ante la estancia superior.
> c) Las resoluciones judiciales de este magistrado, solo aquellas las cuales van contra los intereses de mi cliente, serán inmediatamente recurridas ante la estancia superior.
> d) None of them is correct.

As shown in Figure 1, the most frequent questions included in the exams from the four years considered relate to the use of verb tenses, e.g. question 14, exam session 2018:

> Which of these sentences is correct[24]?
>
> a) Constató que lamentara que su hijo se hubiera divorciado.
> b) Constató que lamentaba que su hijo su hubiera divorciado.
> c) Constató que lamentaba que su hijo se había divorciado.
> d) None of them is correct.

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[20] Correct answer: d

[21] Correct answer: c

[22] Italics have been added for emphasis.

[23] Correct answer: d

[24] Correct answer: b

Finally, the category "Others" includes questions relating to noun–verb agreement, the use of articles, and compounding (e.g. los vigésimo terceros/los vigésimoterceros/los vigésimos terceros/los vigésimosterceros, question 20, exam session 2017).

According to the information published in the exams announcements, a wide variety of legal topics (from practically every branch of law) is covered. 2015 and 2016 examinations shared the same list of topics (limited to the Spanish legal system) that in 2017 and 2018 was slightly enlarged to include international institutions and law. Figure 2 shows the variety and proportion of legal areas covered in the questions on law from the last four examination sessions.
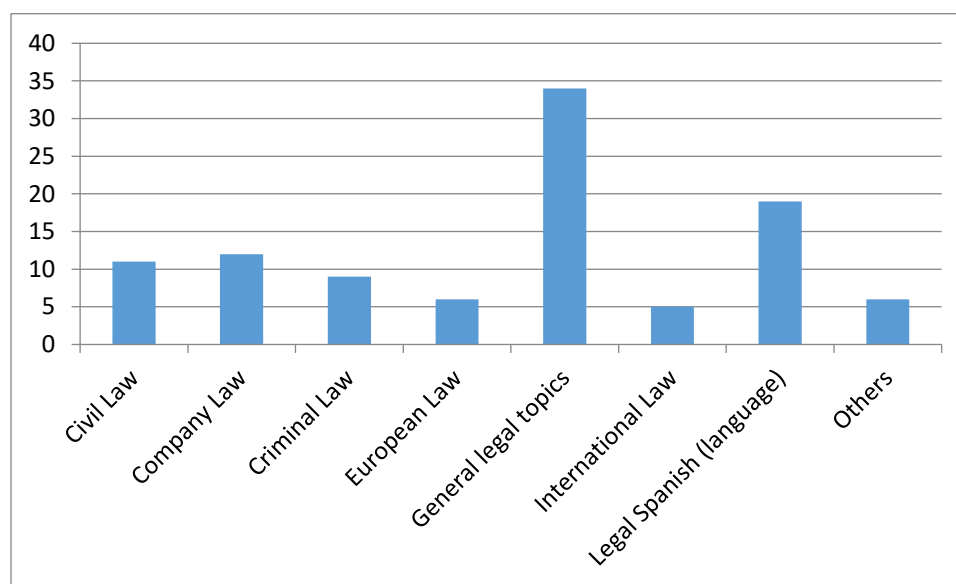

Figure 2: Legal areas and topics

As illustrated in Figure 2, most of the questions test general legal topics, such as the organisation of the Spanish state and legal system and basic concepts in legal proceedings (e.g. questions 47 and 26, exam session 2015):

Which of the following does not have the status of law in Spanish legislation[25]?

a) Legislative decree
b) Organic law
c) Ordinary law
d) Local ordinance

Which of the following rulings does not come from a court[26]?

a) A decree law
b) A simple court order
c) A court order

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[25] Correct answer: d
[26] Correct answer: a

d) A judgement

Questions on legal terminology and phraseology are also quite common (e.g. the meaning of the Latin expression *mutatis mutandis*, question 47, exam session 2016). With regards to the different branches of the law, company, civil and criminal law are tested most frequently (e.g. question 26, exam session 2018; question 52, exam session 2017; and question 55, exam session 2016):

In company law, the term *collusion*[27]…

a) implies a fraudulent agreement.
b) refers to an agreement between various companies to open new markets.
c) means merger.
d) None of them is correct.

Alimony is[28]...

a) a compensatory payment.
b) a bereavement allowance.
c) an orphan's pension.
d) None of them is correct.

What is the term used in criminal law to refer to committing a crime willingly and knowingly[29]?

a) Evil
b) Intent
c) Guilt
d) Recklessness

Less frequent are questions about EU law (e.g. the courts comprising the Court of Justice of the European Union? question 31, exam session 2016) and international law (e.g. the concept of *anti-dumping duties*[30], question 55, exam session 2017). The "Others" category includes other branches such as administrative, tax and employment law.

From the point of view of the training provided on T&I degree programmes at Spanish universities, it should be noted that all undergraduate degree programmes include modules on Spanish language (at native level), whereas only a third of the Spanish universities where legal translation is taught offer an optional or compulsory introductory module on law (Ordóñez López, 2015: 167). The content of these law modules covers the following areas and topics: constitutional law (75%); the concept of law (62.5%) and legislation (50%); the Spanish legal system (37.5%), fundamental rights (37.5%), the organisation of the Spanish state (37.5%) and the different branches of law (37.5%); the European legal system (25%) and subjective rights (25%) (Ordóñez López, 2015: 162). Furthermore, some basic legal

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[27] Correct answer: a

[28] Correct answer: d

[29] Correct answer: b

[30] Italics have been added for emphasis.

content is included in legal translation modules. As shown by Ordóñez López (2015: 161), 45.2% of legal translation modules include comparative analysis of the continental and common law legal systems in their content, 19.4% cover basic legal concepts, and 9.7% deal with the legal systems of the world. As far as the different areas of law are concerned, civil law is covered in 16.1% of the modules and criminal law and commercial law are both included in 9.7% of the modules. Other areas of law such as constitutional, European and tax law are not commonly covered, whilst content about international organisations features in 12.9% of the modules (Ordóñez López, 2015: 161).

The data above suggest that little space is given to modules on law, which, when they are available, cover some of the areas included in the exams (see Figure 2), such as the concept of law and legislation and the Spanish legal system (dealt with in the general law topics category) and European law. Modules on legal translation also cover a wide range of legal content, the emphasis being placed on comparative analysis of continental and common law systems, although basic legal concepts and civil, criminal and commercial law are also included, to a lesser extent. Castillo Bernal and Rodríguez Muñoz (2019) carried out a comparative study in which 3rd and 4th-year students on the T&I degree programme at the University of Cordoba took the first accreditation exams of the 2015, 2016 and 2017 sessions. This analysis of the students' results revealed that, while they performed considerably well on questions about Spanish language, they struggled with questions about law (Castillo Bernal and Rodríguez Muñoz, 2019: 285–292). In fact, according to these authors (2019: 289), students' lack of knowledge about law made it impossible for them to pass the 2016 and 2017 exams, for which the assessment criteria were stricter (see footnote 14). This contrasts to some extent with Vigier Moreno's results, according to which 58.6% of the sworn translators–interpreters who have accreditation from recognition of their degrees and who took part in his study were satisfied with the legal knowledge they had acquired during their studies (Vigier Moreno, 2010: 439) for the professional practice of sworn translation.

4.2.2. Second exam

As described in Section 3, the second exam focuses on translation and comprises three tests. The analysis of the these exams focuses on the 2017 accreditation session, as this is the only one of the last four sessions in which English was tested[31].

Before starting the individual analysis of each test, it is worth noting that although a wide variety of documents that may require a sworn translation, as stated by Mayoral (1999) and Way (2003), most sworn translations fall into the legal, administrative or economic fields. According to Mayoral (2003), documents that are usually translated by sworn translators–interpreters tend to include the following elements: a) "recorded elements: births, marriages, academic studies, deaths, wills, illegal activities, or other legal administrative acts (such as sales agreements or medical prescriptions)"; b) "documentary elements", such as letters, reports, certification forms, etc; and c) "validating elements", such as the certification of formalities required at different stages of a proceeding (e.g. the Hague Apostille) (Mayoral, 2003: 3). Vigier Moreno (2010) stated that the documents that sworn translators–interpreters

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[31]Note that English is the only foreign language into which translation is taught and in which specialised translation modules are offered in all translation degrees in Spain.

translate most frequently are contracts, powers of attorney and academic diplomas and certificates, followed by documents related to civil registries (marriage certificates, divorce certificates, proof of single status, etc.) and documentation involved in international adoptions and Spanish citizenship proceedings (Vigier Moreno, 2010: 59). Gabarda Mas (2014) carried out a study on sworn translators–interpreters for English based in the Valencian Region, which revealed that academic documents, civil registry documents, deeds, appraisals and contracts (sales, leasing, mortgage loans) are the documents most frequently translated (Gabarda Mas, 2014: 21–22).

4.2.2.1.Translation of a non-specialised text in English into Spanish

In the 2017 exam session, the text used for the first translation test was a 353 word article taken from the magazine *Foreign Affairs*, entitled "The United Kingdom's Trump Trap"[32]. It is a non-specialised text, article on international relations, about the relationship between the UK, involved in Brexit negotiations at the time, and the US, discussing the possible effects of Trump's support for the UK on the Brexit process. In this test, the candidates' communicative and textual and thematic and cultural competences (Prieto Ramos, 2011: 12) were evaluated. As mentioned in Section 3, candidates were not allowed to use any dictionary or any other language resource[33].

The assessment criteria used, which are applied for all three of the translation tests in the second exam, are structured in two categories: errors and good translation solutions. The following types of errors are distinguished: i) opposite sense: serious semantic errors, inconsistencies that alter the meaning of the original text or incomprehensible formulations in the target language; ii) wrong sense: semantic errors that do not significantly alter the meaning of the original text, including cultural errors and false friends; iii) lexical inaccuracy; iv) omission; v) addition; vi) morphosyntactic, semantic and orthographic calques; vii) anomalous and unclear syntactic constructions or inadequate style; viii) orthography; ix) orthographic accents. Good translation solutions include: correct style adequate to the context; clear and precise wording, and the use of appropriate terminology (in the case of specialised texts); an adequate knowledge of the cultural context of the text; and the capacity to compensate adequately for gaps in lexical knowledge in the exams without a dictionary. No mention is made of the number of points deducted (or added, in the case of good translation solutions) for each error or of the impact of the different types of errors.

All degree programmes on translation at Spanish universities include modules on non-specialised translation from English (and other foreign languages) into Spanish in which journalistic texts (similar to the text used for this test) are usually covered, amongst other non-specialised texts. The assessment criteria used are not very different from those described above, although some quantification of errors is gradually being included, so that

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[32]http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oport unidadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Directa%20TIJ%202017.pdf.
[33]http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oport unidadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Instrucciones%20para%20el%20segundo%20eje rcicio.pdf.

students are aware of their seriousness[34]. However, the working method is completely different, as translation degree programmes are designed to recreate professional translators' working reality so that students can gradually develop the necessary skills to perform in the translation market. This is probably why several scholars (e.g. Vigier Moreno, 2010: 35 ff.), have expressed their objections to the format of the accreditation examinations, criticising the fact that candidates must translate without dictionaries or any other language resources (glossaries, databases, etc.), which are key working tools for professional translators.

Finally, it should be noted that popular science articles, as well as other non-specialised literary or journalistic texts, are not usually translated by sworn translators–interpreters (as commented in the previous section).

4.2.2.2. Translation of a non-specialised text from Spanish into English

The text used for the test in the 2017 examination session was a non-specialised article, published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, entitled "Un plan contra la contaminación"[35]. It is a 337 word article about the need to adopt anti-pollution measures, such as restricting traffic in city centres. In this test, as in the previous one, the candidates' communicative and textual competences and thematic and cultural competences (Prieto Ramos, 2011: 12) were evaluated. As in the previous translation, candidates were not allowed to use any dictionary or any other language resource in this test. The assessment criteria are the same as those presented above (see 4.2.2.1), although it should be noted that in most cases candidates would have been translating into a non-native language, which poses different difficulties to translating into their mother tongue. According to the published instructions (see footnote 21), candidates had a total of two hours for this and the previous translation, which is little time when compared to most translation examinations at university.

Translation from Spanish into English is included in all study programmes at Spanish universities. The text used in the exam is similar to texts students translate in these modules, which tend to be non-specialised journalistic or literary texts, articles about current affairs, cultural issues and aspects, etc. However, the working methodology differs in the same way as in the previous test, and once again it is worth mentioning that sworn translators–interpreters are not typically commissioned to translate non-specialised articles.

4.2.2.3. Translation of a legal or economic text from English into Spanish

The text in the third test is a 442 word extract from a contract entitled "The Sag-Aftra Merger Agreement", containing the following parts: purpose of the merger agreement, name of new union, effects of merging on pending litigation, due diligence exchange and no conflict. No indication of the source of this contract is given. Using Prieto Ramos' model (2011: 12), this test evaluated strategic or methodological, communicative and textual, thematic and cultural, and, to a lesser extent, instrumental competences (albeit limited to the use of dictionaries).

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[34] Note that translation quality assessment criteria are sometimes different from module to module and it will be necessary to carry out further research in order to examine the variety of assessment criteria in more depth.
[35] http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oport unidadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Inversa%20TIJ%202017.pdf.

According to the instructions provided (see footnote 21), candidates had 90 minutes to translate the text and were allowed to use any kind of dictionary (except electronic ones), whilst the use of glossaries or any other self-prepared resources was not allowed.

The assessment criteria for the translation of this test are the same as those presented above; the only specific reference to legal/economic translation is the consideration of the use of the appropriate terminology as a good translation solution.

Practically all Spanish universities (92%) offer at least one compulsory module on legal translation (from English into Spanish) and the genres which are most frequently covered in these modules are contracts (22.6% of the modules); notarised documents, wills and judgments (19.4% of the modules); legislation and civil registry documents (12.9% of the modules); and university degrees and diplomas (9.7%) (Ordóñez López, 2015: 162). This variety is more in line with the documents listed above in section 4.2.2, which are usually translated by sworn translators–interpreters. The methodology applied to translating legal texts, however, differs notably as students are taught to use the resources available (electronic resources such as corpora, dictionaries, CAT tools or databases) as well as to create and use their own resources (glossaries, etc.). Legal translation modules are designed to help students acquire the necessary skills to work as professional legal translators; they generally try to recreate, in the classroom, the working reality of legal translators, which nowadays includes the use of electronic resources.

4.2.3. Third exam

The third exam is a consecutive interpretation. According to the instructions published[36], the consecutive interpretation recreates the situations in which sworn consecutive interpreting tends to be required most frequently, such as statement taking, court trials, any kind of proceeding at notary publics' offices, etc. Candidates had to interpret from and into the language for which they wished to achieve accreditation. No details were published about the conditions under which candidates had to interpret, e.g. whether they were previously informed about the topic, the speakers, etc. The duration of the exam was 20 minutes.

The assessment criteria for this exam (see footnote 24) were: faithfulness and accuracy regarding content and speakers' intention; correct use of grammar and terminology in both languages; appropriate register; fluency, confidence and professionalism in both linguistic and non-linguistic communication; efficient and appropriate management of the interaction; and problem solving skills.

All T&I degrees at Spanish universities include modules on interpreting, although only 32.4% of them offer specialised interpreting in the legal, economic or public service areas, according to the information provided on their websites. The assessment criteria in these modules are in line with those mentioned above. More information would be needed to evaluate whether the conditions in which candidates have to perform are similar to those in consecutive interpreting modules. For instance, there may be differences in the information

[36]http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/ServiciosAlCiudadano/OportunidadesProfesionalesFormacion/Oport unidadesProfesionales/traduccioneinterpretacion/Documents/Criterios%20de%20evaluaci%C3%B3n%20del %20tercer%20ejercicio.pdf.

candidates are given beforehand regarding the discourse situation and topic, as well as other parameters such as dialectal speakers, expert vs non-expert participants, etc.

5. Final considerations

Having examined the accreditation exams, several issues are worth considering. First, are the current examinations adequate to evaluate the different competences that scholars deem necessary for a legal translator? The candidates' strategic or methodological, communicative and textual, as well as thematic and cultural competences are assessed in these examinations, whereas evaluation of their instrumental competence is very limited, with dictionaries being the only resource candidates are allowed to use. The examinations also fail to test candidates' interpersonal and professional competence[37].

Secondly, are the examinations in line with the current working reality of sworn translators–interpreters? The results of the analysis carried out in this work reveal that two of the three translations the candidates must carry out are not representative of the variety of documents with which sworn translators–interpreters usually work. Furthermore, as noted by Vigier Moreno (2010: 36), the examinations fail to assess candidates' skills for carrying out legal/economic translations into English, despite the fact that this is the field of most translations carried out by sworn translators–interpreters. Another significant difference is the policy on the use of linguistic and subject-specific electronic (and non-electronic) resources, which are a crucial part of the working reality of the vast majority of sworn translators–interpreters but are not allowed in the examinations (except for dictionaries in the specialised translation test).

Third, do degrees in T&I help prepare students for the examinations? The analysis of the examinations carried out in this paper reveals that, as far as the content is concerned, degree programmes in T&I help students acquire the knowledge and skills tested (to a variable extent depending on the specific exam); however, considerable differences are found insofar as the working methodology is concerned. The design of the accreditation examinations seems to be the result of a different conception of translation, understood more as a means of testing candidates' linguistic skills than as a profession. This conception is diametrically opposed to how translation is conceived in the design of T&I degree programmes at Spanish universities, which, since their creation, have been characterised by their applied and practice- and professional-oriented nature.

Finally, as mentioned before, translation and interpreting are not regulated professions in Spain, obtaining this professional accreditation is undoubtedly attractive for translation and interpreting students. It is a way to acquire an official qualification, improve their professional status and widen their range of career options. Taking into consideration these circumstances, as well as the percentages of successful candidates and the mismatch between the examinations on the one hand and the working reality of sworn translators–interpreters and the training and education provided in T&I degrees on the other hand, more cooperation between universities and the Language Interpretation Office would be beneficial to create

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[37] Cf. legal translators' competence model by Prieto Ramos (2011).

synergies and promote and guarantee the quality and professionalism of sworn translators–interpreters, a concern shared by both institutions.

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