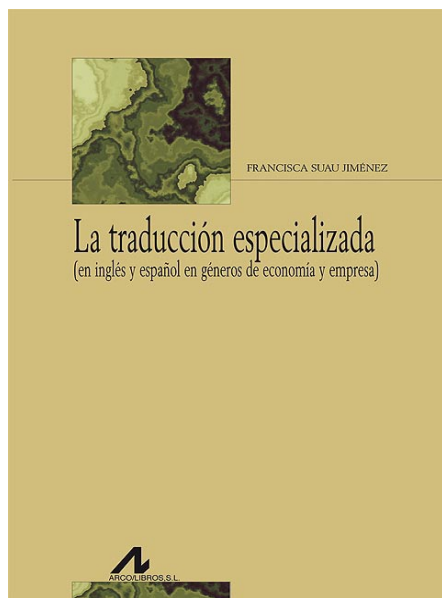




Book Review

Suau Jiménez, Francisca (2010). *La traducción especializada (en inglés y español en géneros de economía y empresa)*. Madrid: Arco libros. Pages: 150. ISBN: 978-84-7635-791-0

Translation books are a rare bird in the Spanish field of translation studies. It is surprising to notice that books devoted to translating specialized languages are not frequent and even less those dealing with the translation of business and economics texts, particularly when translation studies have been taught for decades in Spain and professional economics translations are commonplace. Economics translations, especially in the financial and commercial field, is one of the professional activities with the greatest amount of documents translated annually and one of the fundamental subjects in the several degrees and postgraduate courses on translation in Spain. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why there is such a scant number of handbooks about the theory and practice of this type of translation



published in this country. A quick glance at the database BITRA (Bibliography on Interpretation and Translation), one of the more comprehensive and up to date sources referring to existing publications in these two areas in Spain, with more than 45.000 entries (https://aplicacionesua.cpd.ua.es/tra_int/usu/buscar.asp), throws up only a dozen handbooks on economics translation, six of them in French, four in English, one in Italian and one in Spanish.

The need for a larger number of publications (research works and teaching handbooks) therefore becomes clear, not only in Spanish but also in other languages, this is a need that the present book will to some extent satisfy. Essentially, *La Traducción Especializada* is not a

teaching handbook or a theoretical treatise in the strict sense of the word, since it combines and integrates both aspects in a splendid way. As a result, it caters for readers interested in specialized languages in general to researchers who deal with professional genres in economics and with teachers, translators or students working within this field of translation.

Through a carefully laid out set of epistemological foundation, Francisca Suau Jiménez presents in her study about specialized translation in business and economics the principal disciplines related to an outstanding cross-disciplinary field: the theory of communicative genres initiated by Swales and Bhatia in the decades of 1980's and 1990's, Halliday's functional linguistics, Cabré's and Sager's work on lexicology and terminology, translational works by Nord, Hatim & Mason and Newmark, professional and academic languages by Alcaraz, Hyland and others, not forgetting studies about discourse and metadiscourse, business communication and teaching strategies, etc. In my view, nothing has been left aside, and every opinion from the author is duly contrasted and justified by all the different sources in the book. Besides, it is admirable that this theoretical background providing an overview of the most notable language studies in the second half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st can be concentrated in a 150 page book. The reader never gets the impression of being overwhelmed by this conceptual display or missing the book's focus, which is that of the praxis or application of translation. This is achieved thanks to a precise explanatory style aided at all times by continuous clarifications and examples that are provided to lead the reader through the several ideas and concepts that sustain the author's narrative thread, which derive from a solid theoretical body.

La Traducción Especializada consists of an introduction and six chapters which can be grouped into two differentiated parts. The first one is made up of the three first chapters and deals with specialized translation from three distinct angles: business-economics translation, genre and register applied to specialized translation and finally, metadiscourse in translation. Part two approaches the analysis of business and economics (chapter four) as a type of academic and professional language. Chapter five broadens the concept of genre applying it to the field of business and economics in their different discourse modalities, both printed (letters, reports, leaflets, etc.) and digital, a growing area on the internet. Chapter six proposes a series of steps previous to translation, based on the analysis of different text registers, as well as of their metadiscursive elements. The book ends with a compulsory conclusive chapter where the author justifies and summarises the main points dealt with throughout the whole work and with all the bibliographical references showing all the options and interests that have guided it.

Let us comment in more detail the two parts of the book. In the general introduction, Dr. Suau Jiménez defines the concept of specialized translation, setting its boundaries and giving her personal methodological approach from a twofold perspective, both linguistic (of the system) and social (of its communicative relevance). As the author rightly claims: “se proporciona así una descripción del género, registro y metadiscurso en textos económicos-

empresariales en inglés y español que no existía hasta la fecha” (p.10), that she further applies to the translation of this professional field. And this is true, we are dealing with an area, as I have mentioned above, with a dearth of publications within the Spanish scope of research into translation, we find an abundance of works in general theoretical translation rather compared to those on studies applied to specialized fields. Having established these preliminary premises, the author begins chapter one with a definition of specialized translation and more specifically with the specialized translation in business and economics. It is appalling that some pages need to be devoted to this aim, since it should have been sufficiently dealt with by previous authors, but this is not the case and this is why this chapter proves to be absolutely necessary. Throughout an enlightening review of previous definitions and approaches, the author leads us to understand what is meant by specialized translation and what place is among the diverse modalities within translation.

Further on, the chapter closes with the inclusion of an interesting list of the applied fields of economics and business translation that reveals their true extension and complexity. Chapters two and three depict the epistemological framework that sustains the author's approach to specialized translation. Chapter two focuses on genre and register. Genre identification has a significant role in characterizing the translation of economics and business texts as it describes the specific linguistic and communicative features that characterize a given family of texts such as, for example, business letters, which are different from those of other related families of economic and business texts such as budgets, contracts, payments, and so on. Register in turn refers to the specific selection of vocabulary that must be used when communicating in a particular specialized language. The author considers both concepts as complementary because genres are constructed through particular register choices which in turn include a precise selection of words which is, following Halliday, determined by the field of discourse chosen by the communicator.

The third chapter centres on the second major component which, in the eyes of the author, plays a fundamental role in the specialized translation process: metadiscourse. This essential element in human verbal expression helps to reveal the speaker/writer's true communicative intention in oral and written discourse. Metadiscourse constitutes a subtle linguistic level that gives us cues as to what people actually think when they communicate. These cognitive clues, sown in the text by the writer, have to be properly inferred by the reader if s/he wants to interpret the message correctly. These linguistic-intentional items are usually distributed in the text in a controlled manner in order not to force the reader to follow the author's wishes explicitly, which would, no doubt, be impolite and could cause an adverse reaction towards the writer. The linguistic expression of metalanguage varies greatly from English to Spanish, which evidences a notorious pragmatic and cultural gap between the two languages. For example, as the author says, the use of hedges is much higher in English. This implies that a literal translation into Spanish can lead to a certain artificiality in the resulting text. Metadiscourse elements are often integrated into the different genres and become a

hallmark of these so it is essential to identify them—correctly in order to translate them with accuracy. This implies the application of the corrective measures that Spanish demands of these important facets of communication and cooperation between writer and reader. These issues are admirably covered in this chapter and exemplified in a very useful selection of contrastive exercises that illustrate the reader on the metadiscourse differences in English and Spanish, which, as the author shows on page 42, may produce translations that, while linguistically correct, are communicatively inadequate and poor.

The second part of the book leaves the field of specialized translation as the main focus of interest, although translation underlies its pages. This part includes two chapters with a strong educational component that comprise a large number of practical activities for the reader. Chapter four focuses on the lexical aspects of economic and business language in English and Spanish from the communication perspective that takes place in various business interactive situations. It contains useful activities and valuable suggestions for the translator. Next, the chapter examines the three levels of realization of the economic lexicon: technical or specialized, semi-technical and general. Nevertheless, in my opinion, it might have been more instructive to establish a more marked difference between the technical vocabulary which describes the different financial and business processes, the professional jargon used in specific communication contexts, which is rather difficult to understand for those who are not experts in the matter, and in its very specific terminology; and finally, the specialized lexicon adapted to accommodate lay and non professional addressees who need to understand the highly technical concepts the aforementioned two groups use in their daily activities. Finally, the chapter closes with an interesting discussion on various linguistic aspects of interest to the reader: collocations, complex noun phrases or nominal compounds, false cognates and calques and loans which specialists in the business world, unfortunately, use in excess. The fifth chapter returns to specialized genre analysis. This time, the focus of interest lays on several business and economics genres in English and Spanish. This is mainly a practical chapter devoted to the different written genres, dealing especially with the business letter, the report, the memorandum and the information brochure (with abundant and useful exercises together with explanations about the genre studied, the communicative functions present, the register used and the underlying metadiscourse). The author also addresses the specialized journal paper, which, in my opinion, leaves behind the general approach adopted for the other genres (all of a professional nature) to focus on an academic genre with characteristics that differ from those of the previous ones. The most interesting part of this analysis is the contrast between the formal tone of academic papers and the most informal character of newspaper articles in English, on the one hand, and the apparent lack of such contrast in Spanish which maintains a similar level of formality between academic and media articles, on the other. The chapter then examines the various cybergenres or web genres on the internet where the presence of companies keeps growing at an amazing pace and where the texts generated have to comply with the immediacy of electronic media. The so-called digital genres are gradually

and inevitably prevailing over those on paper: e-mail has replaced traditional mail almost entirely, which graphically receives in English the appellation of “snail mail”. Blogs and websites are further examples of the dynamism, speed and widespread information coverage of the internet that is also reflected in the language and communicative strategies employed which allow for a simultaneous use of oral and written discourse. The internet also provides a comprehensive overview of the information displayed through image and sound and the possibility of establishing an instant business relationship by using varied interactive tools to carry out –enquiries, negotiations, purchases, payments, claims, returns, etc. The chapter closes with a section devoted to the job announcement as a written genre –digital or simultaneously used in printed and digital media. Finally, this interesting and useful work concludes in chapter six with a proposal for analysis prior to the translation task itself which closes the circle with a return to specialized translation. Dr. Suau Jiménez helps readers, by offering some useful guidelines, to identify a number of preliminary and fundamental questions they should address and which summarize the different topics dealt with throughout the volume.

We are convinced that *La traducción especializada*, in addition to filling an important gap in specialized translation studies, is an essential and necessary work for those interested in the use of genre theory and metadiscourse studies in specialized translation. It is also a book of great interest for researchers and scholars in this area of textual analysis. Similarly, its application to economic and business translation offers a valuable perspective to students of translation, professional translators and teachers in this field as it provides very useful theoretical foundation and practical solutions when dealing with this type of specialized translation.

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