

Translating Economic Opinion Articles on the Ukraine Conflict: the Challenges of Intertextuality and Other Literary Devices

La traducción de los artículos económicos de opinión sobre el conflicto en Ucrania: los retos de la intertextualidad y otros recursos literarios

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ABSTRACT

Numerous economic opinion articles on the Ukraine conflict have been published in the specialized media. To hold reader interest, authors incorporate literary devices such as metaphors and idioms, as well as intertextuality, proverbs, quotations, and word play into these articles, a technique that can prove challenging to the translator. This paper studied six Spanish economic opinion articles to determine the type, frequency and difficulty of the different literary devices employed and to analyze which prove most problematic during translation into English. Said articles were chosen from well-established Spanish economic news sources in a six-month period and translated. Tables were created to record the use of the above-mentioned devices. Results suggest that intertextuality and cultural references are more challenging than metaphors or word play, and greater use is made of metaphors and idioms in subsequent articles. It is also concluded that such articles could be useful in the teaching of translation.

Keywords: economic opinion articles, intertextuality, specialized translation, translation difficulties, Ukraine conflict

RESUMEN

Recientemente los medios especializados han publicado numerosos artículos económicos de opinión sobre la guerra en Ucrania, cuyo fin es llegar a un amplio público, captando su atención mediante una serie de recursos literarios como metáforas, modismos, intertextualidad, refranes y juegos de palabras. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar seis artículos económicos en español sobre este tema para determinar el tipo y la frecuencia de los recursos literarios utilizados y su grado de dificultad. Se extrajeron de fuentes prestigiosas del ámbito económico en un rango de seis meses, se tradujeron y se diseñaron unas tablas para volcar los datos. Los resultados indican que la intertextualidad y las referencias culturales presentaron más dificultades que las metáforas y los juegos de palabras y que, mientras avanzaba el conflicto, aumentaba también el uso de metáforas y frases hechas. Otra conclusión final es su utilidad en el campo de la didáctica de la traducción.

Palabras clave: artículos de opinión sobre economía, intertextualidad, traducción especializada, dificultades de traducción, el conflicto de Ucrania

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1. Introduction

Since 2019, the world's economies have been hammered by the consequences of two under-predicted, if not completely unforeseen developments: the COVID 19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The repercussions of these events have been reported to the general public through the press in a way that has not been witnessed before. Every day the press specialized in economic and financial matters together with other types of digital media offer numerous pages of news and analysis of the conflict and its impact, yet this coverage often includes economic concepts and terminology that non-experts may find difficult to fully comprehend. Parallel to such reporting, however, economic specialists and financial professionals as well as seasoned journalists in the field have offered their opinions, tailoring their content to appeal to a discerning if not necessarily academic public. In order to attract and hold reader interest, they typically make use of a number of resources that are more likely to be found in literary works, such as metaphors, intertextuality, sayings, or idioms. They also adopt a persuasive style and use less specialized language in their writing.

The translation of such texts, which can be classified as hybrid in the sense that they include both specialized and non-specialized elements, is required for multilingual websites that offer content to a diverse, and often lay, international readership besides experts in economy. At the same time, the inclusion of the above-mentioned literary devices typical of economic opinion articles provides an excellent opportunity for a study on their translation. The significance of these articles was underlined by the Reuter's Institute Digital News Report of 2020, which commented that "most people like to mix news that they can trust with a range of opinions that challenge or support their existing views" (Newman et al, 2020). Given the global nature of recent events, their translation also takes on a new importance, as do the ways in which the specific challenges involved when translating opinion articles can be overcome.

With this in mind, the main aim of this paper is to analyze the translation difficulties from Spanish to English in economic opinion articles on the Ukraine war in the Spanish specialized media, to calculate how frequently they occur, and to propose how they may be addressed. Similarly, the examination of cultural references will aim to determine the ease or difficulty with which a translator can faithfully convey the author's intention to the target audience. Since the presence of metaphors is expected in this type of text, our analysis will consider whether said metaphors are similar in type to the ones indicated by Muelas (2018: 48) as the most commonly used in standard economic texts (such as personification, human health, the human body, movement, war, etc.) or not. An additional objective of our study involves identifying whether idioms and puns are manipulated to better tie in with the theme of the article, given that such manipulation does not often translate easily from one language to another. Furthermore, we will observe whether the tone and nature of the articles analyzed has changed over the course of the war and, if, as a result, said change has altered the complexity of the translation process.

The results of the analysis should serve as a basis for future guidelines, both in the practice of professional translation in this area and as a teaching resource for translation studies. Since the translation of academic texts on economics can prove extremely demanding even at post-graduate level, opinion articles could provide a valid initial alternative. Although their

terminological content is frequently less complex than that of a formal paper, opinion articles still present other translation challenges such as the translation of figurative expressions.

To comply with all these objectives, we will examine six opinion articles from well-established Spanish economic news sources on the economic repercussions of the Ukraine conflict in a six-month period. The selection criteria and sources are detailed further below. Focusing on the use of metaphors and idioms, intertextuality, proverbs, quotations, and word play, we will analyze which of these elements prove most problematic during translation into English.

2. Background

The translation of an economic opinion article in the specialized media can be described as a point of intersection between several disciplines and text types: specialized and academic texts, general and specialized language, the language of economics, financial journalism, opinion articles, the translation of economic and financial texts, journalistic translation, and the translation of opinion articles. A very brief overview of the main research in these fields follows, focusing, wherever possible, on the most recent publications.

Concerning the first of these text types listed above, Talaván (2011: 23) indicates that the principal aim of specialized texts is “to communicate information about a specific topic”, a goal that can be achieved through “definition, description classification, reference, quotation, listing, exemplification calculation, etc.”. Although Gotti (2005: 36) considers most specialized texts to be merely of an informative nature, involving the use of a neutral tone that could be described as seemingly cold and artificial, Hyland (2010: 116) points to a change in style that evolved over a period of two decades from the 1990s onwards. He contends that although contemporary academic texts “may be more lexically dense, cautious, and nominalized than many other kinds of writing, they aren’t as completely ‘author evacuated’ as we had once supposed”. Using the terms *interpersonality* and *proximity*, he argues that academics negotiate “a credible account of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers” and present material “in ways which are most likely to meet their readers’ expectations”.

Nonetheless, Faber (2009: 108) notes the way in which the information in specialized texts is “encoded in terms or specialized knowledge units, and how “terminology or specialized language is more than a technical instance of general language”. Addressing the fundamental differences between specialized language and general language or language for general purposes (LGP), Monge (2009: 76) indicates that LGP is the language used by a general speech community for normal communication so that people can understand each other without the need for any specialized training. Conversely, specialized language consists of a set of language resources common to a group of speakers. Here, determining factors come into play such as the communicative situation, the topic in question, the particular people involved and the intention of the communication (Monge, 2009: 78). Yet as Monge further elaborates, LGP and specialized language are linked because specialized language is dependent on LGP for grammar, phonological elements and, to a lesser extent, lexicon (2009: 76-77). Sager et al. (in Mangher, 2020: 331) support this view, defining specialized language as “semi-autonomous, complex semiotic systems based on, and derived from general language”, but emphasize that

“their use presupposes special education and is restricted to communication among specialists in the same or related fields”.

Talaván (2011: 20-21) differs somewhat in his opinion from the above-mentioned authors, expressing the need for certain constants to be present for a language to be considered specialized, namely, that the subject matter be limited to a specific field; that the addresser is a specialist in the field concerned; and that the communicative situation is formal. More recently, however, Vlachopoulos (2018: 425) suggests that “the concept of language for specific purposes is no longer viable”, since the notion that it solely includes terminology from a given domain is a misconception (2018: 426).

In the case of economic language, an area of specialized language that is of particular interest in this study, Pizarro (2010: 22) concedes that there is no real consensus regarding the definition of economic language and attributes this partly to the fact that the field of economy is very broad and diverse, and that it has a large number of specialized areas and a wide range of users. Álvarez (2011: 283) recognizes, furthermore, that specialized economic language has evolved from being used only by experts to being used by society as a whole, a phenomenon that has led to interference in economic language and complicated research into economic texts as a result. Indicating how the use of terms, structures and characteristics of general language has increased in that of the economy and vice versa, Álvarez indicates that the use of concepts and terms such as *inflation*, *external debt*, *unemployment* or *import barriers* has become a regular occurrence in mass media communication.

Other authors noted below have drawn a clearer distinction between the different subfields of economics and how this is reflected in the language and style used in them. Fraile (2007: 42) indicates that, as a scientific area, economics consists of several branches, namely, those of the economy, finance, and trade, each of which display particular characteristics that are especially evident in their lexicon and level of formality. More recently, Mínguez (2015: 147-148) provides additional clarification regarding these subfields, noting how the static, elevated, formal, and academic characteristics of language relating to the economy is in stark contrast to the dynamic, expressive, brief, and clear language of finance. The author highlights, for instance, the use of colors (*blue chips*, *red tape*) and animal images (*bull market*, *bear market*), noting a tendency to use a more colloquial and popular language. While emphasizing that the technical vocabulary of economics can be univocal, Mínguez observes that a high percentage of semi-technical words stemming from general language have acquired a particular meaning in the specialized field while not losing their own initial sense, such as *cash* and *check*.

Pessali (2009: 313) has further elaborated in this direction by suggesting that economics “relies on metaphors to build knowledge”. Metaphors also aid understanding: White (2003: 132) points to the largely abstract nature of key economic concepts and notes that “when associated with concrete items, these concepts become more manageable and comprehensible”. Muelas (2018: 48), moreover, indicates the predominance of certain metaphors in economic discourse, indicating “game, war, competition, the human body and its properties and weaknesses” to be among the most widely used.

Turning now from economic language to economic texts and focusing in particular on financial journalism as one of the intersection points of economic opinion articles, Parsons (1989: 11) is clear about the need for economic coverage in the press, indicating that “as long

as there have been markets, there has been a market for information. The growth of commerce, trade and finance has, from the earliest times, been dependent upon the development of an information network". Doyle (2006: 436-437) goes beyond this basic necessity for economic information and looks more closely at the relationship between financial reporting and readership by comparing these aspects in the mainstream media and specialist publications. The author indicates that stories for the business pages of mainstream papers are frequently sourced from "the routine flow of daily announcements of company results, news of mergers or acquisitions, etc." but their selection will also take into account the scale of the event in question and "whether a lay audience (i.e. a mixed readership including many who are not investors) will recognize the players involved". By contrast, Doyle then quotes a *Financial Times* journalist who is very clear on the target readership of the paper: "We're writing for investors such as city fund managers. Our role is to inform educated, professional investors". Thus, for journalists at specialist publications such as the *FT*, "good financial journalism involves in-depth analysis intended to inform and perhaps shape investor sentiment and behavior" (Doyle, 2006: 437). Similarly, Arrese (2017: 379) points to the "very small, but influential audiences" of the economic and financial press, and notes that its limited readership together with the business and market information it provides "have facilitated this media's *carte blanche* to influence elite public opinion in moments of profound political and economic change".

The expression of opinion in the media is the focus of this paper. Regarding the more traditional types of journalistic opinion, namely, the editorial, the column and the opinion article, Pérez Blanco (2018: 522) affirms that "although different in authorship and style, the three types of text have in common their persuasive communicative purpose". León (1996: 208-209) echoes this basic aim of persuasion in opinion articles and stresses the importance of transmitting a convincing argument while engaging the readers and influencing them sufficiently so as to side with the authors and their thoughts. At the same time, notes Pérez Blanco (2018: 523), "the writer must sound convincing, but also be ready to concede or admit alternative points of view".

While García López (2004: 40) argues that readers of opinion articles are less concerned with receiving new information and more interested in knowing the views of a particular expert on the matter, according to Abril Vargas (in Yanes, 2004: 2), the opinion article is complementary to news as it stems from and is inspired by this source. As such, its most important feature is its close link to current affairs. Guest contributors are also important for publications. Gomis (2013: 180-181) indicates that, as a rule, it is the signatory that attracts readers, not the topic itself. While not exclusive to leading names, Gomis considers opinion articles to be a collaboration between the publication and the authors: the writers enhance the quality and prestige of the paper with the use of their names and style, while the publication pays the writers for their contribution.

Gómez and León (1999: 88) liken the difference between informative journalism and opinion journalism to Art. 20.1 of the Spanish Constitution: the right to information versus freedom of expression, observing that opinion, through article writing, has played an increasingly important role in the Spanish press since 1975, both in its literary expression as well as in its journalistic analysis and interpretation. More recently, according to Shen (2021: 4), opinion texts are:

usually written for non-experts of particular claims about the world. Considering the different types of readers, writers of different genres usually employ various rhetorical choices to persuade readers to engage in the discussion and align them with the writer's perspective on the topic.

Turning our attention now to specialized economic translation, another point of intersection in our research, Tagkas (2014: 280) indicates that the translator is “essentially a significant mediator between two cultures – and not just between two languages”, noting that it is “a role which requires special skills and knowledge, particularly when it comes to technical translation, such as the translation of economic texts”. Exactly the extent of the knowledge required is a much-debated issue. Gelpí (2015: 2) concedes that the nature of economic translation clearly calls for translators to have a certain amount of specialized knowledge, but argues that if a global knowledge of the economy were required, comparable to that of an economist, then it would surely be more practical and desirable for a translator to study economics.

While Klabal and Kubánek (2019: 81) also point to the importance of thematic competence, recognizing how terminology is frequently considered the key element of specialized translation, they nonetheless observe that exact equivalents often exist in the target language and indicate a knowledge of concepts as being equally fundamental. By understanding a concept such as *interest rate*, for example, they argue that a translator can see how it “may affect economic growth or whether it is good or bad for a particular group of people in a given situation”. Faber (in Álvarez 2021: 2) echoes this view by noting that the competent translation of a specialized text requires a set of skills that goes beyond a knowledge of terminology and a bilingual level of languages. Rather, translators who are non-experts on a specialized subject must develop the ability to source any knowledge required in the shortest possible time.

Mínguez (2015: 141-142) offers a broad classification of the text types that make up specialized translation in the field of economics. Firstly, this author points to macroeconomic texts, i.e., those which are related to the study of the economy as a whole, and also texts on microeconomics, namely, the agents involved in the functioning of the economy. Secondly, financial texts are indicated which deal with aspects such as obtaining and managing money derived from business, the bank, the stock exchange and so on and then thirdly, those texts from the business world, which the author defines as the socioeconomic activity that permits the exchange of goods and services. One of the difficulties that Mínguez (2015: 148) observes regarding the second group and translation is its tendency to contain colloquial and popular language as well as puns, elements that are often used in economic press headlines to catch the reader's attention.

As regards translation in the media, a key area in our study, Hernández Guerrero (2019: 74) notes how digital advancement in recent decades has had a fundamental impact on the communication sector as a whole, irrespective of the type of medium used in the transmission of information. The author argues that the use of translated material to provide content for the press is extremely common and is not considered as an occupation separate from journalism but rather a part of it. As such, communication networks heavily influence the information that reaches the public: they select it, process it, illustrate it, and afford it either a greater or lesser importance. While translation in the media is constant, its presence is often invisible: as new information is generated, the continuous flow of translated material becomes diluted

and intertwined with material that is produced in the newsrooms. The texts are then adapted to minimize linguistic and cultural differences as readers prefer to receive information in their own language and in the same format as usual (Hernández Guerrero 2019: 75).

Valdeón (2015: 440), furthermore, explores the distinction of stable versus unstable sources in journalism. Pym (in Valdeón 2015: 442) considers news articles to be unstable as they “are constantly subject to updating and adaptation”, whereas Valdeón points to opinion columns and editorials as an example of stable sources (2015: 445). By way of illustration, the author refers to a series of translated opinion columns by one particular writer printed in *El País*, the type of articles described by Hernández Guerrero (in Valdeón 2015: 446) as “final texts in that they may not be modified without the author’s permission, except for the translation process required for a non-Anglophone target audience”. In these translations, Valdeón (2015: 447) observes that he has “not found any significant deviations from the source texts”.

This is a view shared by Ghignoli and Montabes (2014: 393) who note that the opinion article is a type of journalism which does not change fundamentally when translated. Remaining faithful to the original, it is still a well-prepared text on which a translator typically spends more time and effort because it is by a named author. Furthermore, the translation of opinion articles is not generally subject to the pressure of time and immediacy of news stories, meaning that the end product is often of a high standard. Regarding the special difficulties involved in translating opinion articles, Ramírez (2005: 15) indicates how the translator must not only establish the aim of the author of the text through linguistic semantic elements and the use of cultural markers but must also possess the ability to access the necessary documentation in order to capture what underlies the text. Furthermore, Ramírez comments that the complexity of opinion articles, whatever their type, is such that double or even triple the normal effort is required on the part of the translator.

Taking all the elements of the above section into consideration, it may be suggested, therefore, that the economic opinion articles published in the specialized press are indeed of a hybrid nature: they are neither purely academic texts, nor general opinion articles, but rather an amalgam of both, and while they appear in the press, they are not always subject to the same kind of restrictions or manipulation as news stories when translated.

3. Methodology and corpus analysis

3.1. Methodology design

3.1.1. Compilation of samples

The search for suitable opinion articles in Spanish to be analyzed took place over a period of several months during the first semester of 2022 and involved extensive reading of various publications specialized in economic and financial matters. All sources were accessed digitally. The aim was to find pieces written by authors that, ideally, could be considered experts in their fields and whose work had appeared in such specialized publications. Selection criteria also required that there should be clear signs of the author’s view regarding the subject matter.

To ensure the use of high-quality material during article analysis, an online blog presented by *Bankinter* was accessed to discover which economic and financial publications are current-

ly deemed to be the best in Spain. Five of the six articles chosen stemmed from publications listed in the blog. While little limitation was placed on the subject matter as long as it was in some way connected to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, certain types of articles in these publications were rejected during the selection process: editorials, for example, were omitted as these would have reflected the political leaning of the publication as a whole and not necessarily the arguments of an individual author. Furthermore, the text had to be an original piece in Spanish, not a translation from another language.

In all, six articles relating to the repercussions of the war in Ukraine were analyzed: four from the period leading up to and immediately after the invasion in February 2022 (one from 14th January; one from 23rd February; two from 1st March) and two from subsequent months (one from 5th April; one from 28th June). These dates were not chosen at random but selected specifically to fulfil one of the objectives mentioned earlier, namely, to verify whether the tone and nature of the articles changed over time as the conflict escalated. To facilitate article identification during the process of data collection, each title was abbreviated to its first four letters, instead of using numbers (article 1, article 2, etc.).

The first two articles both appeared in *El Economista*. This publication, which has been in edition in its present form since February 2006, is also published in five countries in Latin America. Conceived with the intention of providing a new concept in independent economic journalism, it focuses on business matters and entrepreneurs in the news but is presented in such a way as to be accessible to all readers.

The first article selected was *Ucrania, entre los principios, la fuerza y el gas* [UCRA] (Ukraine: a question of principles, strength, and gas) by the economist and former Spanish MP Francisco de la Torre Díaz, dated 14th January 2022. This indicates the complex situation Ukraine poses in Europe and explores the potential costs of imposing sanctions against Russia. It further considers the problems associated with the use of alternative energies.

The second article was *Rusia pone a los mercados entre la espada y la pared* [RUSI] (Russia puts the markets between a rock and a hard place) by broker company XTB (Spain) Head Strategist, Pablo Gil. This article, dated 23rd February, re-examines three possible economic scenarios defining 2022 and 2023 which were first put forward by the same author at the end of 2021. Its main focus is on the question of energy supplies and rising inflation, and the economic implications of both a shorter and a longer conflict are considered.

Article three was taken from one of the blogs offered by *Expansión*. This economic newspaper was first published in May 1986 with the aim of overhauling the way in which business information was presented and to offer relevant financial news with particular emphasis on the stock exchange. Both its printed and online versions are in the salmon-pink color signalling the category of specialized economic newspapers. Entitled *Comprar cuando suenan los cañones y vender cuando suenan las trompetas* [COMP] (Buying on the sound of cannon, selling at the sound of trumpets), the article is by financial consultant and specialized media contributor Ismael de la Cruz. Dated 1st March 2022, it examines the breaking of commercial ties with Russia while suggesting that the sanctions imposed to date were more limited in their effect than expected. It further indicates the success of certain market commodities despite the conflict.

The fourth article was selected from the same date as article three, 1st March 2022 but from a different source, namely, *Cinco Días*. This publication is part of the PRISA media group. It first appeared in March 1978 and is credited with being a pioneer in the Spanish economic press. It describes itself on its website as constantly “at the forefront of business and financial news and is available on all platforms and devices” (our translation). The article is entitled *Más balas para la inflación* [MASB] (More ammunition for inflation) and is by Santiago Carbó, Professor of Economy at the University of Granada. It addresses the hard-hitting economic consequences of the war affecting not only Europe but also the United States, and explores the likely effects of a combination of global uncertainty and inflation.

Article five is dated 5th April 2022 and is taken from *Invertia*. *Invertia* was acquired by the independent digital newspaper *El Español* from *Telefonica* in December 2019 and was relaunched in February of the following year to compete with leading names in the sector of the economy and finance such as *Expansión*, *Cinco Días* and *El Economista*. It provides wide coverage of markets, financial products, and the corporate sector. The article, entitled *El peligro de que la guerra se alargue* [ELPE] (The danger of a long war) is authored by the writer and economist María Blanco González, who also lectures on the History of Economic Thought in San Pablo CEU. The article discusses the economic implications of an extended conflict with particular emphasis on the effect of soaring energy costs. It also addresses the reasons why economic sanctions on a country such as Russia had a lesser impact, both in 2014 and at the present time.

The final article is called *Bienvenido, Mr. Stoltenberg* [BIEN] (Welcome, Mr Stoltenberg) and appeared in *Economía Digital Ideas*, part of *Economía Digital*, which describes itself as one of the most consulted specialized information groups in Spain. In existence since 2008, the different sections of this online publication have grown over time to include *Ideas*, where contributions are published by a number of writers, both on a regular and occasional basis. Dated 28th June 2022, this is a more political rather than economic article and was written by the financial and geopolitical analyst Santiago Mondéjar to coincide with the beginning of the NATO Summit in Madrid. The article criticizes the different stances of European leaders while putting on a show of unity and indicates the rise of unqualified commentators on the conflict. It furthermore considers possible negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, what could be achieved by such talks, and the political cost to those involved.

3.1.2. Translation and analysis process

Once the corpus was complete, we translated the six texts. During this process, each article was carefully scrutinized to identify and examine instances of intertextuality, cultural references, humor, idioms, metaphors, puns, and sayings. Although not shown in this paper, a table was drawn up to register any potential difficulties with these features as they occurred, grouping them together according to the type of literary device in question and noting how many appeared in each article. Apart from recording the abbreviated name of the article each time, the original words or phrases in Spanish, and translation proposals in English, an extra column was added to the table to list any relative comments concerning the entry. These included explanations regarding the people, places and events referenced directly or indirectly, where information had been sourced either to resolve doubts or to translate famous quotes

more accurately, and why one translation was preferred over another in certain cases. This section of the table was later instrumental in determining the level of difficulty of each entry.

At the end of the process, once all the articles had been analyzed and translated, results were compiled, and the most significant examples of the discourse devices were noted.

3.2. Corpus analysis

3.2.1. Intertextuality and cultural references

Instances of intertextuality occur frequently in the six articles but in different forms. These range from a recurring idea that begins and ends a particular article to a mere handful of words that are present simply to reinforce a point or to provide more variety in the text, thereby sustaining the reader's interest.

Article UCRA, for example, uses the entire first paragraph to refer to Tennyson's poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854), in which heavily outnumbered British soldiers were mistakenly called on to attack the Russian enemy in the battle of Balaclava during the Crimea War. The reference is clearly named and described so that certain aspects, such as the correct rank in English of Lord Cardigan who led the charge, can be easily researched. With a comparative reference to the current situation in Ukraine both at the beginning of the article and towards the middle, the last paragraph then closes with a final mention of the battle that took place more than a century ago.

By contrast, article BIEN makes reference to *la visita de los tres tenores europeos a Kiev [...] seguida al día siguiente por el bufón de Downing Street*. Bearing in mind that all the articles used in this study are from the first half of 2022, if one wished to research who the three tenors might be in this case (definitely not Domingo, Carreras and Pavarotti), the clue lies in what can only be the visit of Boris Johnson on 17th June (not infrequently described as a "buffoon" in the UK and certainly the resident of 10 Downing Street at the time). Yet, the fact that they are Mario Draghi, Olaf Scholz and Emanuel Macron is not required for the translation itself as the reference to "the three tenors" can be translated literally into English. Why this turn of phrase has been chosen, perhaps owing to the close relationship between these leaders, perhaps because the Four Big European Countries are now just three after Brexit, again, is immaterial to the translation.

Nonetheless, when article ELPE, for example, discusses the *excepcionalidad ibérica* and the calls for its revision, the expression refers in this case to an EU plan, so the translator must research the official name given to it by the European Commission in English. The plan, allowing Spain and Portugal to temporarily decouple the price of gas from that of electricity, is known as the Iberian Exception, a literal translation of the Spanish original.

Cultural references also appear in different ways in the selected articles. The author of article RUSI breaks up the three parts of a title to a well-known film, namely, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (1966), to divide the text into three sections, using each part of the title to convey an opinion as to the desirability or lesser evil of the economic scenarios described. There is no difficulty in the actual translation, but the Spanish name of the film, *El bueno, el feo y el malo*, (which follows the word order of the original in Italian and translates literally to *the Good, the Ugly and the Bad*), differs from the order of the accepted English version. Here,

however, the translator has no choice but to respect the sequence of the film name used by the author in Spanish: the three parts of the title are each separated by a number of paragraphs and an attempt to use the accepted English word order would imply completely overhauling the design and flow of the original article.

More difficult to recognize is the cultural reference in the article BIEN: [*alentar a Zelenski a que escale su pulso con Putin*] y exigir más madera. *Más madera* is a reference to the mis-translation into Spanish of some exclamations made during the Marx Brothers' film *Go West* (1940). To maintain the high speed of a train at all costs, in English, Groucho calls out "timber" repeatedly. This becomes ¡*Traed madera!* ¡*Es la guerra!* (literally, *Bring wood! This is war!*) in the dubbed Spanish version, and although the phrase is reasonably well-known in Spain (and has even been used as an online article title on more than one occasion), it does not have an obvious counterpart in English. Here, the translator may well have to resort to a paraphrase, such as [*to encourage Zelensky to step up the pace with Putin*] and call for whatever it takes.

Also appearing in article BIEN is the following reference: *La guerra está a cargo de un comediante profesional para cuyo gabinete se ha rodeado de sus antiguos compañeros de trabajo de la productora televisiva que le hizo famoso*. Necessary research on the part of the translator reveals that before becoming President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky was an actor and comedian who starred in a series about a teacher becoming the President of Ukraine. Furthermore, in an online news article, the BBC (*Ukraine's Zelensky picks TV colleagues*, 2019) indicates that cabinet positions were given to producers, a scriptwriter and a Kvartal 95 studio co-founder among others. Once the reference is understood, it becomes clear that a literal translation is perfectly acceptable here: "The war is in the charge of a professional comedian, who, in choosing his cabinet, has surrounded himself with former colleagues from the television production company that made him famous".

3.2.2. Metaphors and idioms

As considered in the introduction, several categories of metaphors typical of economic texts appear in the selected articles, most of which do not present much difficulty during translation. Some of these were paraphrased while others retained a more literal character in the target language. The human body, for example, features on various occasions: in RUSI *la gran pregunta que ronda nuestras cabezas* (the big question on everyone's mind); in ELPE *pero también trae de la mano una crisis* (but it also brings a crisis with it); *Sánchez aparece con un plan [...] debajo el brazo* (Sánchez turns up with a plan [...] tucked under his arm) and *ya han levantado la voz las eléctricas europeas* (European electricity companies have already spoken out).

Similarly, there is frequent use of health and sickness metaphors: in MASB *tienen algo más que malestar con sus propias tensiones inflacionarias* (they are more than a little troubled by their own inflationary pressures) and *los mercados van a ser un termómetro estresado* (the markets will be a tense gauge); in ELPE *la herida va a ser grande y la cicatriz profunda* (the wound will be severe and the scar, deep). Metaphors of personification also appear in various articles: in COMP, for example, *el mercado ha entendido* (the market has realized) and *para los mercados [...] el aumento de la inflación ya era una gran preocupación* (for the markets

[...] the increase in inflation was already a source of great concern); in MASB *las divisas asiáticas comienzan a sudar* (Asian currencies are becoming very uneasy).

War metaphors are characteristic of economic texts, so given the subject matter of the articles analyzed, their presence was to be expected here: in UCRA *para plantear una batalla económica y energética* (to contemplate an economic and energy battle); in COMP *siempre hay mercados vencedores y vencidos* (there are always winners and losers when it comes to the markets); in BIEN *sosteniendo un tipo de guerra a base de carne de cañón* (waging a type of war based on using cannon fodder).

Other metaphors are used as idioms, and in certain cases require more research on the part of the translator to find a similar expression in the target language. This is so in the title of RUSI: *Rusia pone a los mercados entre la espada y la pared* (Russia puts the markets between a rock and a hard place) and later in the same article, *actuarán con pies de plomo para no provocar el pánico* (they will tread carefully so as not to cause panic). In ELPE, too: *la crisis nos pilla, de nuevo, con el pie cambiado* (the crisis has, once more, caught us on the hop) and *la mayoría de los españoles estaremos con el agua al cuello* (most of us in Spain will find ourselves in very deep water). In certain instances, two idioms using metaphors appear in quick succession. This occurs in ELPE: *que es un brindis al sol como una casa* (which is pie in the sky to put it mildly) and, referring to problems of inflation, *no aparcarlos a la espera de que amaine el temporal* (not put them on the back burner until the storm dies down).

In other cases, metaphors have become accepted technical terms in their own right, as can be seen in RUSI: *accidente financiero* (financial accident) and in COMP: *es importante no dejarse “engañar” por el rebote del gato muerto* (it is important not to be “fooled” by dead cat bounce) or *el shock petrolero de los años 70* (the oil crisis of the 70s).

Additionally, similes are used, either to represent more clearly the significance of a certain measure as in ELPE: *lo que llaman “letra pequeña”* (what they refer to as the “small print”) or to re-reference concepts mentioned earlier in the same article. The latter appears in UCRA where the French Cavalry’s intervention in the Battle of Balaclava is noted for having saved more British soldiers from death, i.e., preventing a worse situation. Later when considering nuclear power as an alternative energy, the author recognizes the problems involved with waste and power station costs but observes that uranium is inexpensive and easily stored: *es lo que podríamos denominar la opción de la “caballería francesa”* (this is what we could call the “French Cavalry” option).

3.2.3. Word play and humor

There is a distinct lack of humor in the articles analyzed which can be explained by the seriousness of the subject matter. Nonetheless, there are limited instances of word play. These occur in different forms in three of the texts and, for the most part, do not present particular translation difficulties.

On the one hand in UCRA, for example, the key word of a metaphoric idiom is repeated shortly afterwards in its literal sense: *se pueden aplicar sanciones a Rusia, pero buena parte del precio lo pagaríamos en Europa* (sanctions can be imposed on Russia, but Europe would pay much of the price), followed just a few lines down by *los precios que pagamos por la electricidad en Europa* (the prices we pay for electricity in Europe). On the other, in COMP,

there is a possible mirroring of the famous Hamlet soliloquy when referencing the dilemma of the Central Banks: *seguir o no seguir con la hoja de ruta de endurecimiento de sus políticas monetarias* (to continue or not to continue with the roadmap of tightening their monetary policies).

The title of MASB is itself a play on words. It uses a war metaphor in an article about war to convey the idea of circumstances conducive to an increase in inflation: *más balas para la inflación* (more ammunition for inflation). Furthermore, in the same article, one of Cicero's maxims is quoted, once again with a reference to war but with more complicated word play in the following sentence: *ya decía Cicerón que “las leyes callan cuando las armas hablan”*. *No obstante, las consecuencias no guardan silencio*. In this case, the English version of the original Latin saying *silent enim leges inter arma* had to be researched and slightly differing versions were found which included *in times of war, law falls silent* or *among arms, the laws are silent*. More time was spent in order to avoid repetition of the word *silent* in the target language, opting finally for the variant: *as Cicero said, law stands mute in the midst of arms. The consequences, however, do not stay silent*.

3.2.4. Proverbs and quotations

Cicero aside, there are further examples of proverbs and quotations. In RUSI, for instance, the common proverbial phrase *las desgracias nunca vienen solas* is used. While the corresponding elements in the target language change completely (it never rains but it pours), the meaning is the same: when one misfortune occurs, others often happen at the same time, exacerbating the situation.

Comprar cuando suenan los cañones y vender cuando suenan las trompetas (buy on the sound of cannon, sell at the sound of trumpets) is a saying attributed to 18th century London financier Nathan Rothschild and the title of article COMP. It suggests that the beginning of a war is a good time to invest because prices are lower, whereas the best time to sell is when the war is at an end and prices rise again. As in the case of Cicero above, the main difficulty when translating this type of saying is deciding on which of the several versions available should be selected, while also considering the suitability of the source in each instance.

Much the same can be said of *la guerra es un asunto demasiado serio para dejarla en manos de los militares*, a quotation attributed to Georges Clemenceau, former Prime Minister of France, and used in article BIEN. The English versions found included *war is too important to be left to the generals*; *war is too important a matter to be left to the military*; *war is too serious a business to be left to the generals*; *war is much too serious a thing to be left to military men* and *war is too serious a matter to entrust to military men*. The latter, stemming from Oxford Essential Quotations (Oxford Reference, 2017), was deemed the best option given the reputability of its source.

4. Discussion

In order to better illustrate the instances of literary content together with the potential degree of difficulty each may suppose to the translator, two tables were drawn up in which values are also conveyed by means of percentages.

Table 1 below shows the frequency with which the different types of literary devices appeared in the six articles. Firstly, it indicates the number of times each type appeared and then, in brackets, the percentage that this occurrence represented in relation to the other devices used.

Table 1. Statistical representation of frequency

Name of Article	Intertextuality and Cultural References	Metaphors and Idioms	Word Play and Humor	Proverbs and Quotations
UCRA	5 (38.5%)	7 (53.8%)	1 (7.7%)	0
RUSI	3 (25.0%)	11 (66.7%)	0	1 (8.3%)
COMP	3 (12.0%)	20 (80.0%)	1 (4.0%)	1 (4.0%)
MASB	5 (17.9%)	20 (71.4%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (3.6%)
ELPE	5 (21.7%)	17 (73.9%)	0	1 (4.4%)
BIEN	21 (60.0%)	13 (37.1%)	0	1 (2.9%)

Articles UCRA and RUSI were published in January and February respectively, the latter article appearing just one day prior to the invasion of Ukraine. While the frequency of intertextuality and cultural references in these two does not differ substantially from those of later articles (with one notable exception), metaphors and idioms, however, are far less prevalent in the earlier publications: only 7 and 11 instances as opposed to 20 (twice) and 17, for example. This may be due to the fact that both UCRA and RUSI were addressing possible scenarios and outcomes from a Russian invasion that had not yet happened. By contrast, the later articles were post-invasion and relied to a greater extent on metaphors to give more vivid accounts of the economic consequences already becoming apparent or most likely to occur given the course of the conflict. At the same time, the choice and quantity of metaphors used by the authors provided a valid mechanism for them to convey their opinion on unfolding events.

One article stands out for the number of cultural references and instances of intertextuality it contains: the final article, BIEN, which appeared some four months after the beginning of the hostilities. This may be explained by the fact that, several months on, much had taken place: the words, actions and visits made by high-ranking international politicians, the details of Zelensky's past career, the territorial advances made by the Russians and the unlikely prospect of peace negotiations. As mentioned earlier, this was a far more politically orientated article than the other five, which again may account for the differences between them. With article BIEN maximizing its number of references, the use of metaphors and idioms diminished almost to pre-invasion figures.

As regards word play and humor, proverbs and quotations, the number of entries remained relatively uniform across the six articles, ranging between 0 and 2 instances for each type of device.

By contrast, Table 2 (see below) examines the degree of difficulty that each entry represented during translation. This is a major focus of our study, since an advanced understanding of the levels of difficulty involved in the translation of a particular text type is highly useful. In an educational context, it is fundamental not only to have a clear perception of the overall abilities of students but also to be able to strike a balance between the more challenging features and the less problematic passages of the texts used. This is key to successful and productive learning. At the same time, if newly qualified translators can be aware of the type of difficulty

to expect from economic opinion articles based on the findings of a study such as this, it could aid their decisions regarding whether to accept translation projects or not.

Nonetheless, difficulty is a subjective concept: a reference, an expression or simply a sentence that one translator considers difficult may not be the case for another. In addition, there are different aspects of difficulty: an expression or reference in the original language may be unknown to a translator but a solution easily found for the translation by online research. This, for example, could be considered as having “no difficulty”. Yet, in other cases, given the context and tone of an article, finding the most suitable words for a sentence may sometimes imply that translators must resort to dictionaries or lists of synonyms, and spend time deciding on the right choice. These instances could be described as involving “some difficulty”. Likewise, a particular quotation may be familiar, but has become distorted over time, spawning several variations, and once more presenting “some difficulty” when working into the target language. If, in addition, it forms part of a play on words in the text, then the thought processes involved in the translation would be deeper, more time-consuming, and therefore deemed as involving “considerable difficulty”.

These three, therefore, were the different levels of difficulty taken into account during the analysis and represented in the table below: no difficulty (ND), some difficulty (SD) and considerable difficulty (CD). The first figure in the cells of the table represents the number of times a literary device registered a particular level of difficulty and then, in brackets, the same figure is calculated as a percentage in relation to the other levels of difficulty for the same article.

Table 2. Statistical representation of translation difficulty

Name of Article	Intertextuality and Cultural References	Metaphors and Idioms	Word Play and Humor	Proverbs and Quotations
UCRA	ND: 4 (80.0%) SD: 1 (20.0%) CD: 0	ND: 7 (100%) SD: 0 CD: 0	ND: 1 (100%) SD: 0 CD: 0	0
RUSI	ND: 3 (100%) SD: 0 CD: 0	ND: 8 (72.7%) SD: 3 (27.3%) CD: 0	0	ND: 1 (100%) SD: 0 CD: 0
COMP	ND: 0 SD: 3 (100%) CD: 0	ND: 16 (80.0%) SD: 4 (20.0%) CD: 0	ND: 1 (100%) SD: 0 CD: 0	ND: 0 SD: 1 (100%) CD: 0
MASB	ND: 3 (60.0%) SD: 2 (40.0%) CD: 0	ND: 17 (85.0%) SD: 2 (10.0%) CD: 1 (5.0%)	ND: 1 (50.0%) SD: 0 CD: 1 (50.0%)	ND: 0 SD: 1 (100%) CD: 0
ELPE	ND: 2 (40.0%) SD: 2 (40.0%) CD: 1 (20.0%)	ND: 13 (76.5%) SD: 4 (23.5%) CD: 0	0	ND: 0 SD: 1 (100%) CD: 0
BIEN	ND: 11 (52.4%) SD: 9 (42.8%) CD: 1 (4.8%)	ND: 11 (84.6%) SD: 2 (15.4%) CD: 0	0	ND: 0 SD: 1 (100%) CD: 0

Observing table 2, it is clear that the greater majority of metaphors and idioms across the six articles, in fact, presented “little difficulty” during translation. This may be explained by the authors’ tailoring of content to suit a broader readership and using easily recognized material. Even so, it should be noted that in three articles, “some difficulty” with metaphors was registered with percentages ranging from between 20% and 27%, irrespective of the publication date of the article.

By contrast, in the case of intertextuality and cultural references, the gap between the instances of “no difficulty” and “some difficulty” is greatly diminished. In four of the articles, for example, the percentages of “some difficulty” occupy between 40% and 100% of the total figures for this type of literary device. This would seem to imply that the authors are counting on a well-established level of cultural knowledge from their target audience, especially in the case of article BIEN. Here, we deemed it necessary to check references on numerous occasions as the percentages of “some difficulty” illustrate.

Instances of “considerable difficulty” occurred only on four occasions in the six articles: twice in the case of intertextuality and cultural references, which even with research did not provide obvious solutions, once with word play and once with the translation of a particular metaphor.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the results obtained in the study coincided with certain observations from previous works mentioned in the literature review. As indicated by León (1996), there was clear intent on the part of the authors to transmit their arguments convincingly and to engage the readers. As Ramírez (2005) had put forward, the study also demonstrated that the translator was often required to access relevant documentation in order to correctly interpret the underlying essence of the text and the author’s persuasive intentions. By contrast, and as argued by Klabal and Kubánek (2019), the analysis showed that terminology often has an exact equivalent in the target language. Furthermore, the specific metaphors regularly associated with economic texts (game, war, competition, the human body), and mentioned in the bibliographical overview by Muelas (2018) were also found to be present in the articles analyzed.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have conducted an in-depth analysis of opinion articles on the economy. These articles have the distinction of being written by specialists, but they are aimed at a broad public that may or may not be expert on the matter. As a text type that mixes conventions and resources of different genres, the translation of such articles is, as a result, especially challenging. In this respect, both quantitative and qualitative studies regarding the Spanish to English translation of intertextuality, cultural references, proverbs and quotations, rhetorical references such as metaphors and word play, as well as other aspects such as idioms, lead us to the conclusion that, in contrast to what one may suppose, the greatest degree of difficulty lies in intertextuality and cultural references, and to a lesser extent, in word play and metaphors. In this sense, a significant majority of metaphors and idioms proved to cause little difficulty and only some metaphors fell into the category of medium difficulty. From this, we may conclude that these are indeed texts with ample cultural content, in which intertextuality and references to a wide range of cultural aspects form the basis of much of the political-economic commentary in these articles. As such, a mastering of this area plays a more significant role in producing a successful translation than that of the economic terminology itself.

For this reason, the global gateways to information that publish translated versions of such articles should be aware that non-specialized translators and automated translations tools, often used in the media, are unsuitable here because an in-depth analysis of intertextuality and

cultural features is required as a preliminary step. Furthermore, attention should be drawn to another important and overlooked factor: the stage at which the political-economic issue focused on in the article also determines the type of device most used by the writer. In this way, for example, metaphors and idioms are used much less in the earlier articles on the war in Ukraine than those analyzed later, possibly because the development of events was more conducive to distinctive and dramatic styles of opinion that required a more striking means of expression. In fact, as the conflict escalated, this was also observed in an increased use of the other devices studied (references, intertextuality, word play, etc.) as is shown by the final article, which presented the highest total number of devices in all the corpus.

In conclusion, this study is consistent with observations in previous research, and also provides important new insight into the translation of a more specific and less researched type of opinion article, namely, one which combines economic content with that of a more literary nature, focusing on highly relevant and current topics such as the war in Ukraine. This is a very useful text type that can be applied to the training of specialized translation in journalism or the economy and for teaching advanced translation subjects at undergraduate level or as part of a master's degree in translation. A future line of research, could, therefore, focus on measuring its effectiveness as a teaching tool. Furthermore, a contrastive analysis of this text type in the specialized press of different European countries such as France, Italy, and Germany, still remains to be studied and could identify the similarities and differences in their translation.

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