

# The challenge of legal language terminological collocations in translation: the case of machine translation from Russian into Spanish

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## Abstract

Today, rapidly advancing technology and artificial intelligence are transforming our lives in all areas, including translation. Machine translation (MT), for its part, has significantly improved the quality of translation and in some areas has reached or surpassed human translation (HT). However, legal translation is inherently complex due to the use of fixed collocations or expressions and the unchangeable structure of legal language, which undoubtedly makes the task of translation difficult for machines. Therefore, the aim of this work is to respond to the urgent need to analyse the usefulness of MT as a digital teaching resource in the teaching of legal translation in phraseology. This article examines the challenge of MT of terminological collocations in the legal language of criminal law in the Russian-Spanish translation classroom through a test-type exercise with master's students. The results obtained show that although MT tools can be useful in some cases, their effectiveness in phraseological translation is limited and they can lead to significant translation errors, which is why a measured and critical use under human supervision is recommended.

**Keywords:** Machine translation, legal language, phraseology, terminological collocations, human translation, translation classroom.

## Resumen

*El desafío de las colocaciones terminológicas del lenguaje jurídico en la traducción: el caso de la traducción automática del ruso al español*

Hoy en día, el acelerado avance de la tecnología y la inteligencia artificial están transformando nuestras vidas en todos los ámbitos, incluida la traducción. La

traducción automática (TA), por su parte, ha mejorado significativamente la calidad de las traducciones y, en algunas áreas, ha alcanzado o incluso superado a la traducción humana (TH). Sin embargo, la traducción jurídica es inherentemente compleja debido al uso de colocaciones o expresiones fijas y a la estructura inalterable del lenguaje jurídico, lo que sin duda dificulta la tarea de traducción para las máquinas. Por ello, el objetivo de este trabajo es responder a la necesidad urgente de analizar la utilidad de la TA como recurso didáctico digital en la enseñanza de la traducción jurídica en el ámbito de la fraseología. Este artículo examina el desafío que representa la TA de colocaciones terminológicas en el lenguaje jurídico del derecho penal en el aula de traducción ruso-español, a través de un ejercicio tipo prueba con estudiantes de máster. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que, si bien las herramientas de TA pueden ser útiles en algunos casos, su eficacia en la traducción fraseológica es limitada y pueden provocar errores significativos de traducción. Por ello, se recomienda un uso moderado y crítico bajo supervisión humana.

**Palabras clave:** Traducción automática, lenguaje jurídico, fraseología, colocaciones terminológicas, traducción humana, aula de traducción.

## 1. Introduction

Since the late 1940s, machine translation (MT) has evolved considerably, thanks to the development of new algorithms and advances in artificial intelligence and natural language processing (NLP) (Trujillos-Yébenes & Muñoz-Miquel, 2022). Today, because of globalisation and technological advances, MT is a very popular tool for overcoming language barriers, allowing effective communication between people of different languages and cultures (Casacuberta Nolla & Peris Abril, 2017). In this line, MT is widely used in different fields of knowledge to extend their reach and enter new markets, allowing communication of a cross-linguistic nature (Canavilhas, 2022). In the field of education, MT serves students well by providing access to information in different languages, allowing them to learn and explore new ideas and concepts. In addition, MT has also had a significant impact on both international diplomacies, facilitating communication between foreign countries and promoting understanding and cooperation, and security and intelligence operations, helping analysts to quickly translate and analyse large volumes of documents in foreign languages (Arevalillo Doval, 2012).

In this sense, it is an undeniable fact that MT has become an indispensable tool in our increasingly digitised world. As MT technology advances, it is

expected to become even more efficient and accurate, further enhancing its usefulness as a specific terminology support, which is crucial for improving accuracy and textual coherence (Roiss, 2021). In this context, translation memories, for example, store previously translated text that can be used to improve the quality of future translations by ensuring consistency and reducing the need for manual editing. Glossaries, on the other hand, provide a list of technical terms and their translations, ensuring consistent terminological translation (Corpas Pastor, 2001).

In addition to this specific terminology support, MT also benefits from the use of algorithms and conscious neural networks that can better understand the meaning of words and phrases based on the surrounding context (Vargas-Sierra, 2020). As a result, the quality of MT has improved significantly in recent years, and it is increasingly accepted as a reliable and useful tool for communication and translation. However, the indiscriminate use of this digital tool without human review has generated a great deal of controversy among translation professionals, as the idea of relying solely on machines to perform translations without the inevitable human review has raised concerns among professionals in the field (Diéguez & Cabrera, 1997).

One of the main reasons for this concern is the issue of accuracy and naturalness of language, since MT is not always able to accurately capture the wide range of nuances and subtleties that language offers, especially when it comes to phraseological units (PUs), which are endowed with cultural references within a context or specialised language that human native speakers of a language can easily handle. Thus, without human revision, there is a risk that the translated text may contain errors or inaccuracies that may negatively affect the final message (Ramírez Rodríguez, 2022; Ramírez Rodríguez & Antonov, 2025).

In terms of the benefits of MT, the changes in the professional world of translation are significant due to the advancement of artificial intelligence and the availability of more powerful and free MT systems that are available to anyone with access to the internet (Alvarez-Vidal et al., 2020). Experts in the field of translation and computational linguistics claim that the quality of MT is currently comparable to that of human translation, or even superior to that of translators in certain domains (Hassan et al., 2018). However, recent research (Läubli et al., 2020; Toral, 2020) has shown that the approaches used to assess translation quality in previous studies were not adequate. One of the problems identified was the lack of professionalism of

translators, who lacked subject matter expertise, leading to errors and inconsistencies in technical translations.

According to Borja Albi and Martínez-Carrasco (2019), despite the current widespread use of MT in the translation industry, only 13% of subjects related to new technologies in 26 Spanish universities offering a degree in translation and interpreting mention MT in their curricula, which does not guarantee its application in practice. This suggests that, although language service providers are adapting to new technological developments to some extent, Spanish universities do not seem to be keeping pace. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to define new approaches for future professional translators, considering the advances in MT quality, in order to identify their possible fields of action in the future.

Furthermore, despite the predicted advances in automation, the field of phraseology in general, and the legal field, remains a challenge for these digital systems (Chen, 2020; González Pastor & Rico, 2021). Legal documents are often dense and technical, making them difficult to translate accurately, and the use of collocations or fixed expressions specific to legal language further complicates the translation process. It is in this context that the aim of this study was born to analyse the usefulness of MT as a digital teaching tool in the teaching of legal translation, considering some characteristics and trends in the field of professional translation within the framework of phraseology. To this end, the quality of the translation from Russian into Spanish of a series of terminological collocations related to criminal law, specifically in the area that refers to different types of crimes faced by ordinary citizens, was evaluated by Russian Masters students in Translation and Interpreting, making comparisons in both languages (see section 3). In this way, we believe that by comparing the errors found in the translations, it is possible to analyse the implementation of MT in legal translation training, as well as to determine which competences could be improved with this approach.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The language used by legal professionals is known as legalese, although it is a specific variant of the general language that we use almost unconsciously in our daily work (Juste & Molés-Cases, 2022). In this line, the term “specialised language” covers two aspects: on the one hand, the specialisation according to the subject matter (criminal, judicial, etc.) and, on

the other hand, the specialisation according to the characteristics of the process of information exchange, that is, according to the circumstances of the discourse, which is conceived as a process of impersonal communication and, therefore, different from the communication model of the general language that we use in everyday situations (Cabr  & Azevedo, 2019; Ribeiro-Alves & Ferreira Cabrera, 2021).

There are also some differences between legal language and general language. Firstly, the main difference lies in the use of specific terminology, which is necessary to convey a specific thematic content (Del Valle Cacula, 2020; S nchez Ramos, 2019). Thus, if we stick to legal language, every user must learn a set of terms specific to this field. Secondly, there is a certain opacity in legal language since the interlocutors belong to professional groups related to the law, such as judges, lawyers, etc. Although the law stipulates that justice should be accessible to all and that regulatory and procedural texts should be understandable to citizens or laypersons, in practice this is not always the case, resulting in legal texts that are incomprehensible to those without specialised knowledge in the field (Luque Janodet, 2021).

In legal language, there are no different levels of specialisation, as is the case in other scientific fields, where a more accessible language is often used to carry out the task of scientific dissemination to all types of publics. Regarding the channel through which information is transmitted, most legal language is processed in written form or by means of a transcription of oral communication (C zares S nchez, 2020). The terminology specific to legal language is specialised and is used by the experts who create the specialised language. The fundamental difference between legal language and general language lies in the content of the specialisation and the terms used to denote the concepts specific to law, as well as in the type of discourse used (Hern ndez Garc a, 2021; Orts Llopis, 2019). Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the monosemy and lexical precision as two of the characteristics that give the legal language its name, which means that each term is always used in the same sense without giving rise to ambiguities (Hourani-Mart n, 2020).

## **2.1. Phraseology in legal language: the challenge of collocations in MT**

Today, legal issues are extremely important and are regulated by basic policies and rules set by major powers such as the EU. In this globalised context, the

use of specialised languages and professional multilingual communication is essential. According to Alcaraz et al. (2007) and García Izquierdo (2012), legal translation (LT) is one of the most complex branches of translation, as it requires not only linguistic skills but also specialised knowledge and expertise. Cao (2007), for his part, stresses that LT combines the creativity of literary translation with the terminological precision of technical translation. Moreover, LT allows people with different levels of knowledge to access information in different languages in public relations with administrations or in private relations between individuals or legal entities (Borja Albi & Martínez-Carrasco, 2019; Trovato, 2018).

Specialised translation requires specific competences in terms of meaning, terminology, and phraseology in all fields, including legal translation (Monzó, 2008; Muñoz-Miquel, 2015). LT is complex due to its opaque and difficult language, as well as its specific phraseology, grammar, and stylistic features (Martínez-Carrasco, 2017). These difficulties are accentuated in different areas of law and legal systems (Borja Albi, 2013). To acquire competences in legal translation, these specificities and difficulties must be considered, and specific sub-competences must be considered, such as knowledge of the translation process, problem identification and resolution, and decision-making (Hurtado Albir et al., 2020). Furthermore, although there are models for acquiring these competences, it is important to make them known and to address them specifically in legal translation training.

In this sense, the complexity and the defining characteristics of legal language are relevant for the application of MT in legal texts and pose challenges for machines to solve (Mileto, 2019). To date, studies on the use of MT in translator training have been conducted with promising results, even in specialised languages such as legal (Moorkens, 2018; Nitzke et al., 2019; Wiesmann, 2019). In this sense, the present study contributes to the research on specialised translation technologies and investigates the use of MT as a tool in legal translation training.

LT refers to the translation of legal documents and materials that require in-depth knowledge of the concepts, terminology, and phraseology of the field. In this sense, LT is a highly specialised field that requires prior knowledge of both the source and target languages, as well as of the legal systems and cultures of the two countries in question (Borja Albi, 2005). In other words, LT involves the translation of a wide range of legal documents, such as contracts, patents, wills, powers of attorney, court documents, legal opinions,

and regulatory documents, which often contain concepts and terminology that require in-depth knowledge of both the source and target legal systems.

In this context, one of the main challenges of specialised LT is the lack of equivalence between legal systems and terminologies in different languages. Legal concepts and terminology are often unique to a particular legal system and culture and may not have a direct equivalent in another language (Martínez López & Vella Ramírez, 2017). This can lead to difficulties in accurately conveying the meaning of legal documents. Another challenge for specialised LT is the need for accuracy and precision. Legal documents require a high degree of both, as even small errors can have significant legal implications. Translators must therefore ensure that they convey the meaning of the source text accurately and consistently in the target language, while at the same time ensuring that the translated text is legally valid and complies with the laws and regulations of the target country (González Vallejo, 2021).

The relationship between phraseology and legal language is crucial in the field of LT. The use of precise legal language in legal documents is essential to ensure that the meaning is clear and that there is no room for ambiguity or misinterpretation. Phraseology, on the other hand, refers to the way in which words are combined to form fixed, and sometimes idiomatic, meaningful expressions (Ramírez Rodríguez, 2024). In the context of legal language, phraseology plays a crucial role in conveying legal concepts accurately and effectively. Legal phraseology usually consists of a set of expressions, usually collocations, that are used repeatedly in legal documents. These prefabricated units play a significant role in the interpretation of legal texts, which are rich in complex and abstract concepts that may be difficult for the lay public to understand. Phraseology, in this case legal phraseology, helps to clarify these concepts by providing a clear and precise framework. For example, in Spanish law, the expression “inmueble urbano” refers to urban property, which can include buildings, land and other real estate located in urban areas. This expression is essential in legal documents relating to property transactions and its correct use is fundamental to their legal validity.

Collocations in the phraseological universe, or terminological collocations in the legal field, refer to a fixed lexical combination that occurs with some frequency in specialised discourse (Ramírez Rodríguez, 2023). In legal language, collocations are often used to express complex concepts that are difficult to translate accurately using a literal translation approach. In this sense, if we want to translate the verbal collocation “dictar sentencia” or

“emitir un fallo” into Russian, a simple literal translation would not be sufficient, but we would have to look at parallel texts of the Russian legal system to see how this idea is translated into Russian in this case: “**вынести приговор**” (lit. “pronunciar un dictamen”). Therefore, identifying and translating collocations in legal language is crucial for accurate and effective translation.

In legal language, collocations are widely used and often have a specific legal meaning that is not obvious from the sum of the meanings of the constituent parts. For example, in Spanish law, the expression “*resolución judicial*” refers to a judicial decision or ruling. Since “*resolución*” means decision and “*judicial*” means related to judicial power, the collocation “*resolución judicial*” acquires a specific legal nuance that goes beyond the individual lexical meanings.

MT is the process of using computer algorithms based on predefined rules or statistics applied to the source text to generate a translation, so one of the main advantages of MT is its ability to support specific terminology. In addition, MT can process large volumes of text in a short time, which is crucial for companies and individuals who need to communicate quickly. The speed of MT can help reduce communication delays, allowing businesses to move quickly and take advantage of opportunities. In addition, MT is often less expensive than hiring a human translator, especially when translating large volumes of text.

However, the translation of legal collocations poses several challenges for MT systems. These include 1) Idiosyncratic nature, because, as mentioned above, legal collocations are often idiomatic, meaning that their meaning cannot be deduced from the individual words that make up the sentence. MT systems that rely solely on literal translation may have difficulty in accurately translating this type of entity. 2) Contextual nature: legal collocations often have contextual meanings that depend on the specific legal context in which they are used. MT systems that do not have access to this contextual information may have difficulties in translating them accurately. 3) Lack of consistency: legal collocations are often used inconsistently, which means that they may have different meanings in different legal contexts. MT systems that do not have access to large corpora of legal texts may have difficulties in identifying and translating these inconsistencies.

In general, MT can be a useful tool for improving a non-native speaker’s interlanguage skills by helping them to expand their vocabulary. By using



MT, non-native speakers can translate unfamiliar words or phrases and learn their meaning in real-life contexts. In addition, MT can also help to identify grammatical patterns by seeing how sentences are translated in the target language, using grammatical structures and syntax more effectively, and thus analysing and correcting errors. However, it is important to note that MT has limitations. Often MT is not context-aware and can produce incorrect translations. It is therefore important to use MT as a complementary tool and not as a final solution.

### 3. Methodology

Bearing all of this in mind, to look from a different perspective, it is necessary to acquire a new approach based on the reality of translation classrooms. During the learning process, learners are confronted with the need to acquire competence in translating from a foreign language (L2) into their mother tongue (L1) and vice versa. It is therefore essential that learners have a high level of textual competence in both directions.

The present study on phraseology focuses on experimenting with the ecological model of language through terminological collocations, with the help of living examples in the legal field of criminal law in both Russian and Spanish. In this context, phraseological competence is part of a process that expands according to the needs and interests of the speakers. Starting from this premise, this fact can be transferred to the translation classroom, with the aim that students receiving training in this speciality learn those collocations that have an echo in their own language.

Thus, the main objective of the article is justified by the analysis of the phraseological transfer in MT during the process of learning the collocations of legal language in criminal matters in the translation classroom, understood as fixed expressions that have a decisive influence on the meaning as the main linguistic factor within the phraseology of a community of speakers.

First, a list of collocations belonging to the field of criminal law was prepared for the class to work on. After presenting the list of collocations related to the different types of crimes that citizens may face, students were asked to research the meaning and context of use of each collocation using digital pedagogical tools such as specialised dictionaries and electronic corpora. Subsequently, in order to discuss the translational differences

between the different variants proposed by the machine translators, the participants were asked to make use, firstly, of the human translator, i.e. the translations produced by themselves using the knowledge acquired about the meaning and context of use of the collocations, and, secondly, of the machine translators *DeepL*, *Reverso*, *Google Translator* and *Yandex*, in order to carry out an analysis and comparison of the translations proposed by these tools for each collocation, as well as to review the main difficulties encountered in the translation process and offer strategies for resolving them.

This study adopted a hybrid methodology, combining descriptive and empirical approaches. First, the descriptive part focuses on the review of the most recent literature to establish the theoretical framework that defines the key concepts of this work, such as the quality of phraseological translation in criminal law, as well as the complexity of legal translation and its relationship with MT. Second, from an empirical point of view, a comparative analysis of the translation errors identified through a test-type exercise by master's students in Translation and Interpreting was carried out. This analysis lays the foundations for further research on the same subject in other specialised languages, given that MT and its applications are already a reality in the field of specialised translation and that its knowledge and use are essential.

### 3.1. Aim, sample, and instrument

The quantitative approach was chosen as the basis for this research. Objectivity is sought to obtain clear and precise results that will help to draw relevant conclusions. The quantitative approach is useful in clarifying the object of study, using tables, figures and graphs that will facilitate the understanding of the data presented and their correct interpretation.

The proposed activity focuses on text analysis and offers a new didactic approach that strengthens the understanding of the communicative act as a cohesive and complex whole, while stimulating the personal development of each student through the enrichment of their mental lexicon in the process of learning these phraseological units.

Furthermore, the focus of the research is to analyse, using MT, how fixed expressions such as collocations are conceptually represented and interpreted in Spanish due to their strong illocutionary and pragmatic load. The aim is to assess the critical ability of Russian learners in using MT as a

useful and effective tool for translation and to observe how this influences the teaching and learning process in the translation classroom. The fact that the object of study is limited to only one type of phraseological unit –collocations– is inescapably related to cognitive studies that consider the intersection between phraseology and cognitive linguistics. This paper presents a phraseological approach through the contributions made in the digital terrain provided by the natural language of MT. The terminological collocations analysed are presented in judicial contexts in criminal matters. The criteria used to select them were their frequency of use in Spanish and the technical register in which they are usually used.

In the light of the above, the experience of analysing, conceptualising, and deciphering idiomatic phraseological contexts in translation classes in Russian-Spanish combinatorics was carried out with 40 Russian master's students of modern language translation. All participants, from the second year of the master's degree with Spanish as a second foreign language, fulfilled the requirement of having studied translation, specifically training as translators and interpreters. As for the level of Spanish proficiency, all the students were certified at the independent user level, B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Consejo de Europa, 2002).

About the instrument used to obtain the research data on terminological collocations in Spanish, this was the elaboration of judicial material in criminal matters using the four different machine translators *DeepL*, *Reverso*, *Google Translator* and *Yandex* to work independently on each of the 20 collocations selected from the multilingual terminology database IATE. The importance of focusing on phraseology in general and on collocations is justified by several reasons. Among these, the most pressing for this work are, on the one hand, their frequent occurrence in terminological communicative exchanges between native speakers and, on the other hand, their expressive and natural contribution to the discourse (see section 2.1).

Furthermore, according to Majewska and Korhonen's (2023) classification, all collocations can be divided into 3 groups, depending on the context, which serve as a support and starting point for establishing terminological patterns and phraseological equivalences (section 2.1). According to the classification proposed by these authors, and taking into account our object of study, terminological collocations in the field of criminal law would fall into 3 subgroups: in the first group would be those collocations whose

phraseological equivalences, in our case in Spanish and Russian, would be complete, i.e. when the same collocation corresponds in both languages at both lexical and syntactic levels, as in the case of “cometer un delito fiscal” (совершить налоговое преступление – commit a tax offence) or “cometer un delito de falsificación de documentos” (совершить подделку документов – commit a document forgery offence), which exist in Russian in their literal form. The second group consists of those collocations whose equivalents are partial both in structure and content and in semantic meaning, as in the case of “cometer un delito de homicidio involuntario” (to commit the offence of manslaughter), in Russian: “совершить непреднамеренное убийство” (lit. “cometer un asesinato impremeditado”) or “cometer un delito de blanqueo de capital” (to commit a money laundering offence), in Russian: “совершить отмывание денег” (lit. “cometer un lavado de dinero”). Finally, the third group of collocations includes those collocations whose visual representation and style are completely different, i.e., they represent null phraseological equivalence, such as the case of “prestar declaración” (to give evidence) in Russian: “дать показания” (lit. “dar muestras”) and “presenter cargos” (to press charges) in Russian: “выдвинуть обвинение” (lit. “sacar acusación”).

Given the level of Spanish of the participants and the extreme complexity of learning phraseological units in the context of criminal law, only those collocations belonging to the second group of collocations of partial phraseological equivalence were considered in this study, thus excluding the last group of zero equivalence, as well as the first group of full phraseological equivalence, since they do not present or assume any kind of challenge for comparative terminological phraseology. The following table (Table 1) shows the 20 collocations related to criminal law with reference to the different types of offences. There are four columns in the table. The first column is the denomination of the selected collocation. The second contains the examples of the Spanish collocations with the English translations. The third contains the examples of the Russian collocations with the literal English translations, and the last one with the literal Spanish translation of the collocations word by word from Russian.

Nº	Spanish collocations with the English translation	Russian collocations with the literal English translation	Literal translation from Russian into Spanish
COL1	Cometer un delito por blanqueo de capitales ( <i>to commit a money laundering offence</i> )	Совершить отмывание денежных средств ( <i>to commit money laundering</i> )	Cometer un lavado de fondos monetarios
COL2	Cometer un delito por malversación de fondos ( <i>to commit an offence of misappropriation of funds</i> )	Совершить растрату средств ( <i>to commit embezzlement of funds</i> )	Cometer un despilfarro de los fondos
COL3	Cometer un delito por malversación de fondos públicos/peculado ( <i>to commit an offence of misappropriation of public funds</i> )	Совершить хищение государственных средств ( <i>to commit embezzlement of public funds</i> )	Cometer un secuestro de fondos estatales
COL4	Cometer un delito por homicidio ( <i>to commit an offence of manslaughter</i> )	Совершить убийство ( <i>to commit murder</i> )	Cometer un asesinato
COL5	Cometer un delito por suplantación ( <i>to commit an offence by impersonation</i> )	Совершить мошенничество в отношении личности ( <i>to commit fraud against an individual</i> )	Cometer un fraude en relación con la identidad
COL6	Cometer un delito por prevaricación ( <i>to commit an offence of prevarication</i> )	Совершить злоупотребление должностными полномочиями ( <i>to commit abuse of official authority</i> )	Cometer un abuso de las funciones oficiales
COL7	Cometer un delito por usurpación ( <i>to commit an offence by usurpation</i> )	Совершить незаконное захватывание имущества ( <i>to commit unlawful seizure of property</i> )	Cometer una apropiación ilegal del patrimonio
COL8	Cometer un delito por fuga ( <i>to commit an offence by absconding</i> )	Совершить побег из тюрьмы ( <i>to escape from prison</i> )	Cometer una huida de la cárcel
COL9	Cometer un delito por violencia de género ( <i>to commit a gender-based violence offence</i> )	Совершить насилие в отношении женщин ( <i>to commit violence against women</i> )	Cometer un abuso en relación con las mujeres
COL10	Cometer un delito por desacato ( <i>to commit a contempt of court offence</i> )	Совершить неуважение к суду ( <i>to commit contempt of court</i> )	Cometer una falta de respeto al juez
COL11	Cometer un delito por omisión de socorro ( <i>to commit an offence of omission to give assistance</i> )	Совершить неоказание помощи ( <i>to commit failure to assist</i> )	Cometer una falta de ayuda
COL12	Cometer un delito por cohecho ( <i>to commit a bribery offence</i> )	Совершить взяточничество ( <i>to commit bribery</i> )	Cometer un soborno
COL13	Cometer un delito por sedición ( <i>to commit a sedition offence</i> )	Совершить подстрекательство к бунту ( <i>to incite a riot</i> )	Cometer una incitación a una rebelión
COL14	Cometer un delito por difamación ( <i>to commit an offence of defamation</i> )	Совершить нарушение чести y достоинства ( <i>to commit a breach of honour and dignity</i> )	Cometer una infracción del honor y la dignidad
COL15	Cometer un delito por resistencia a la autoridad ( <i>to commit an offence of resisting arrest</i> )	Совершить сопротивление полиции ( <i>to resist the police</i> )	Cometer una oposición a la policía
COL16	Cometer un delito por allanamiento de morada ( <i>to commit an offence of housebreaking</i> )	Совершить незаконное проникновение в жилище ( <i>to commit unlawful entry into a dwelling</i> )	Cometer una irrupción ilegal a la vivienda
COL17	Cometer un delito por conducción temeraria ( <i>to commit a dangerous driving offence</i> )	Совершить опасное вождение ( <i>to commit dangerous driving</i> )	Cometer una conducción peligrosa
COL18	Cometer un delito por tenencia ilícita de armas ( <i>to commit an offence of illegal possession of weapons</i> )	Совершить незаконное хранение оружия ( <i>to commit illegal possession of a weapon</i> )	Cometer un mantenimiento ilegal del arma
COL19	Cometer un delito por evasión fiscal ( <i>to commit an offence of tax evasion</i> )	Совершить уклонение от уплаты налогов ( <i>to commit tax evasion</i> )	Cometer un desvío del pago de impuestos
COL20	Cometer un delito por acoso laboral ( <i>to commit an offence of harassment at work</i> )	Совершить домогательство на рабочем месте ( <i>to commit harassment in the workplace</i> )	Cometer un abuso en el lugar de trabajo

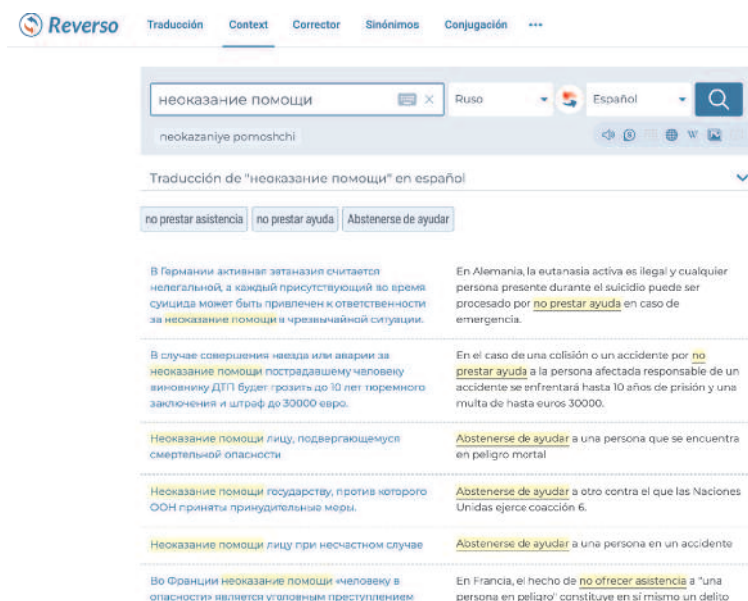
Table 1. Selected terminological collocations for phraseological activity by type of partial equivalence.

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

For the data collection, all students responded voluntarily and took the test during the month of March 2023. The test was an individual, one-hour exercise carried out telematically through the university's TUIS platform. The questions used were those presented in Table 1, framed in the context of criminal law. An example of the test can be seen below, specifically the contexts in which the Spanish terminological collocation “delito por omisión de socorro” and its multiple translation variants offered by the *Reverso* machine translator from Russian into Spanish (Figure 1). In this

sense, students are obliged to familiarise themselves with the phraseological terminology used in the different contexts in which this collocation appears.

It can also be seen that among the suggestions that *Reverso* offers for “delito de omisión de socorro”, stand out: “no prestar ayuda”, “no prestar asistencia” and “abstenerse de ayuda”, among others. However, of all the contexts that appear under this term in Russian, only one retains the terminological collocation “omission de socorro”, which demonstrates the low phraseological or collocational productivity of MT in legal matters.



**Reverso** Traducción Context Corrector Sinónimos Conjugación \*\*\*

неоказание помощи

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Traducción de "неоказание помощи" en español

no prestar asistencia no prestar ayuda Abstenerse de ayudar

В Германии активная эвтаназия считается  
незаконной, а каждый присутствующий во время  
суицида может быть привлечен к ответственности  
за **неоказание помощи** в чрезвычайной ситуации.

En Alemania, la eutanasia activa es ilegal y cualquier  
persona presente durante el suicidio puede ser  
procesado por **no prestar ayuda** en caso de  
emergencia.

В случае совершения наезда или аварии за  
**неоказание помощи** пострадавшему человеку  
виновнику ДТП будет грозить до 10 лет тюремного  
заключения и штраф до 30000 евро.

En el caso de una colisión o un accidente por **no  
prestar ayuda** a la persona afectada responsable de un  
accidente se enfrentará hasta 10 años de prisión y una  
multa de hasta euros 30000.

**Неоказание помощи** лицу, подвергающемуся  
смертельной опасности

**Abstenerse de ayudar** a una persona que se encuentra  
en peligro mortal

**Неоказание помощи** государству, против которого  
ООН приняты принудительные меры.

**Abstenerse de ayudar** a otro contra el que las Naciones  
Unidas ejerce coacción 6.

**Неоказание помощи** лицу при несчастном случае

**Abstenerse de ayudar** a una persona en un accidente

Во Франции **неоказание помощи** «человеку в  
опасности» является уголовным преступлением

En Francia, el hecho de **no ofrecer asistencia** a "una  
persona en peligro" constituye en sí mismo un delito

Figure 1. Contexts of “omisión de socorro” in Reverso.

To analyse the data, a quantitative analysis of the phraseological information on legal collocations was carried out to synthesise the data obtained and to examine the relationships between the variables measured in the research. Firstly, the relevant information was obtained on the collocations selected from the multilingual terminology database IATE ([https://e-justice.europa.eu/119/ES/glossaries\\_and\\_translations](https://e-justice.europa.eu/119/ES/glossaries_and_translations)): collocations specific to legal language, excluding other types of phraseological units such as locutions, paretias or other phraseological expressions. Then, among the different types of collocations, 20 units with partial phraseological

equivalents in Spanish and Russian were selected (Table 1), with the help of the *Pan-hispanic dictionary of legal Spanish* (<https://dpej.rae.es/>).

As for the work plan, in awareness of the problems of MT, the proposed collocations were deliberately selected (partial equivalence) and analysed in automatic search engines in order to provoke deeper reflection among the Russian participants. In this way, the results in terms of phraseological equivalence can be better analysed and contrasted with the Russian language as a reference. The following example shows how the most widely used machine translators in Russia –*Yandex*, *Google Translator* and *DeepL*– are unable to translate the exact terminological collocation “omisión de socorro” into Spanish, offering simple literal versions, omissions or even substitutions that do not preserve positional correspondence (Figures 2, 3 and 4). In this way, it will be concluded how students solve the proposed phraseological task and how MT influences the learning, interpretation, and translation of these phraseological units into Spanish.

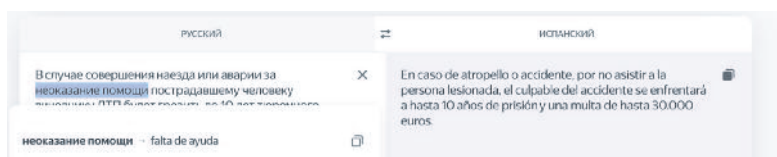


Figure 2. Example of “omisión de socorro” in Yandex Translator.

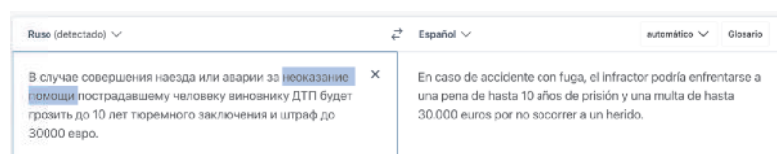


Figure 3. Example of “omisión de socorro” in DeepL.

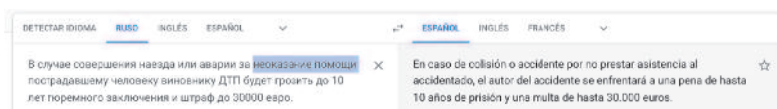


Figure 4. Example of “omisión de socorro” in Google Translator.

For the exercise proposed on the university platform, the participants were first given a context in Russian, followed by its translation into English, omitting the collocation in question to be decoded. All the contexts proposed for the phraseological activity were provided with the help of the

Russian language thesaurus ruSKell (Russian Language Learning) <https://skell.sketchengine.eu/#home?lang=ru>. For the answers, 4 possible alternatives were added in Spanish, one correct and two incorrect, which may or may not match, depending on the degree of phraseological equivalence. Below is an example of the 20 collocations selected for this test (Figure 5), in which the collocation “**неоказание помощи** – omisión de socorro” (omission of assistance) in Russian is contextualised with the correct option, which would correspond to a degree of partial equivalence with Spanish, and three incorrect ones; the first variant of full equivalence which would correspond to its literal translation (lack of help), as provided by *Yandex*, the second variant of partial equivalence, in this case expressed simply with the collocational expression “not to render assistance”, as reflected in *Google Translator*, and the third variant of null equivalence, as “to run away”, as provided by *DeepL*. All these tools were used in part because of their accessibility to students and their popularity in Russia.

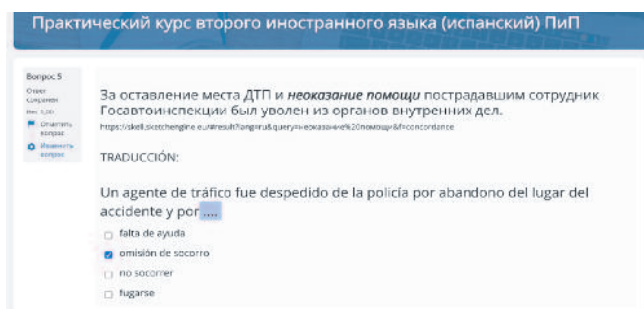


Figure 5. Example of “omisión de socorro” on the TUIS platform.

## 4. Results and discussion

According to the results of the exercise shown in Figure 6 (number of hits per collocation) and considering the number of correct answers for the partial equivalence collocations relating to criminal law, the following collocations predominate: (COL4) delito de homicidio, (COL8) delito de fuga, (C9) delito de violencia de género, (COL15) delito de resistencia a la autoridad, (COL17) delito de conducción temeraria, (COL18) delito de tenencia ilícita de armas and (COL20) delito de acoso laboral.



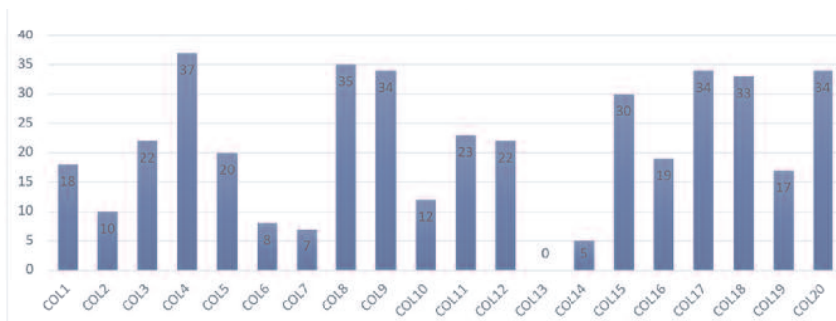


Figure 6. Results obtained by number of hits per collocation.

All these collocations form part of the group that registered the highest number of hits, because, according to the participants, although most of them do not correspond in full equivalence, there were certain elements in the collocations, either the collocative or the base, that helped decisively in deciphering them naturally, such as homicide and murder, escape and flight, gender and woman, resistance and opposition, driving in both languages, weapons in both languages, and work and labour. This highlights the similarity that exists in relation to similar concepts or laws in the legal systems of both countries. Moreover, in this case, the MT provided by most of the machine translators mentioned above was of great help, because although they did not provide terminological collocational equivalents, they did provide the literal meaning of lexical items that the students did not know, such as the nouns homicide and resistance or the adjectives reckless and unlawful, which had a positive influence on their choice of the correct option.

Among the collocations with the lowest number of hits by students were: (COL2) delito de malversación de fondos, (COL6) delito de prevaricación, (COL7) delito de usurpación, (COL10) delito de desacato, (COL13) delito de sedición and (COL14) delito de difamación. On the other hand, the following cases fall between the two groups with an average number of hits: (COL1) delito de blanqueo de capitales, (COL3) delito de malversación de fondos públicos, (COL5) delito de suplantación, (COL11) delito de omisión de socorro, (COL12) delito de cohecho, (COL16) delito de allanamiento de morada and (COL19) delito de evasión fiscal.

If we analyse the collocations with fewer hits mentioned above, we can see that they all have a common denominator. They are terminological

collocations whose structures differ in content in the two languages. In the case of Russian, all these collocations are listed under the exact description of their meaning: violation of honour and dignity, i.e., defamation, or illegal appropriation of property, i.e., usurpation. This highlights the characteristic of dual membership of the legal language, where most of the terms belong both to the language of specialisation and to the general language. In Spanish, on the other hand, legal language is dominated by terminological precision without the need to explain the meaning of the term, opting for an economy of language by simplifying the meaning as much as possible under a monolexematic reference: *prevaricación* (prevarication), *usurpación* (usurpation), *desacato* (contempt of court), *sedición* (sedition), *suplantación* (impersonation), etc. This undoubtedly hinders learning or acquisition during the translation process, since learners start from the premise that whatever is reflected in the source language must be translated into the target language. For example, if learners encounter the case of “delito por allanamiento de morada” (criminal offence of housebreaking) in Russian (“совершить незаконное проникновение в жилище”, lit. “cometer una irrupción ilegal a la vivienda”), the message should be translated into Spanish, considering the number of words that make up the Russian collocation. On the other hand, in most cases the MT played against the students by giving the literal meaning of the collocations and sometimes even omitting them.

However, the group of collocations located in the middle, balancing the scales, is particularly striking. According to the students, after spontaneously discussing collocational questions in class about the proposed exercise, these are the seven collocations mentioned above, for which the participants were able to find the key thanks to the context in which they were inserted. If we pay attention to the content and structure of these collocations, we can see that they are a potpourri of units that usually belong both to the group of collocations with the lowest level of correctness (monolexematic collocations in Spanish) and to the group of collocations with the highest level of correctness (collocations similar in structure and content in both languages). On this occasion, however, the legal context was the reason for their choice of the correct answer. In addition, MT also played an important role in the choice of the correct option, since, thanks to the rapid translation of the lexical context, the students were able to correctly interpret the utterance, even though the collocations were somewhat difficult to decipher, and thus to insert the correct collocation in each context. In the case of the

collocations with a lower number of correct collocations, the MT did not do its good service and caused confusion among the students, which led to a misinterpretation of the context and therefore to a failure to decipher the exact collocation in Spanish.

## 5. Conclusions

The main objective of this research is to demonstrate that MT tools, although they do not represent a real threat to the work of translators, should be better considered as far as technical and/or phraseological terminology is concerned. It is true that they can increase translators' skills and productivity in the translation process, although this depends on the domain and technical level. On the other hand, human intervention today is something that should not disappear under any circumstances, so it is important to enhance and strengthen it through the use of MT and other computer-assisted translation technologies.

Furthermore, although the results of the study show that MT still has significant errors that need to be corrected by human translators, MT offers a faster and, in some cases, better translation than can be done by specialised translation students, thanks to the context facilitated by algorithms and specialised databases. In this sense, it is proposed that MT can be a useful training tool in the teaching of legal translation, helping students to understand the structure and grammar of collocations and specialised terms.

It is suggested that incorporating MT into the training of legal translators can enhance their knowledge of the translation process and improve their problem identification and problem-solving skills. As a brief suggestion for incorporating MT into the classroom, it would be useful to introduce post-editing of MT translations in fictional translation exercises, which would allow students to practice post-editing and understanding MT output. In this sense, although more empirical studies are needed to make a full assessment of the benefits of incorporating MT in translation training, it is suggested that MT can significantly improve the learning process and increase students' autonomy in post-editing specialised texts.

Ultimately, the use of MT in the training of legal translators would have benefits not only in terms of language and translation training, but also in the development of technological skills. By working with MT and their first translations, students could increase their understanding of how the

technology works and learn how to post-edit, an important skill for the future of professional translation. In addition, this could help students to develop skills in programming MT tools in the legal field to improve training, increase productivity and participate in the training and development of MT engines.

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