Mapping the Cultural Interference of Term Variation

Cartografía de la interferencia cultural de la variación terminológica

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Abstract: Communication in a specific setting should be carried out efficiently since language miscomprehension can prevent the message from reaching the audience adequately. More specifically, the correct use of particular terms is essential in specific texts to describe concepts. These terms could be expressed differently when used in other languages and this fact could cause interferences in language communication. In this paper, the main objective was to determine if the written form of terms varied and interfered with cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, to determine the causes of term variation across languages in texts written in different languages, it is important to establish clear distinctions between the semantic fields of words. The corpus of this research was composed of twenty texts written in English and the same twenty texts written in Spanish that transmitted the agreements of the United Nations related to specific topics. They were written in the official languages of the United Nations in such a way that there was not an original or target language, they were supposedly written originally in all the languages at the same time. In order to determine if the written form of terms varied in a specific setting, the selected texts were analysed with Wordsmith Tools 5.0. First, the key words of the texts in Spanish and in English were identified, and then the written forms and the use of synonyms in Spanish and in English

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were compared and contrasted. The results showed that there were variations in the interpretation of terms when expressed in different languages and those may be due to cross-cultural interference.

Key words: Specific language; terms; linguistic variation; written form.

Resumen: La comunicación en un entorno específico debe de realizarse de forma eficiente, puesto que una comprensión incorrecta puede producir que ciertos mensajes no lleguen a la audiencia de forma correcta. De forma más específica, el uso correcto de un término concreto es esencial en textos específicos para describir conceptos. Estos términos se pueden expresar de forma diferente cuando se usan en otras lenguas y este hecho puede causar interferencias en la comunicación lingüística. En este artículo, el objetivo principal es determinar si existe variación en la forma escrita y si este hecho pudiera interferir en la comunicación entre culturas distintas. Así mismo, determinar las causas de la variación de términos cuando se escriben en otras lenguas es importante para poder diferenciar los campos semánticos de las palabras. El corpus de esta investigación está compuesto de veinte textos escritos en inglés y en español cuyo objetivo es transmitir los acuerdos de las Naciones Unidas respecto a cuestiones específicas. Están escritos en las lenguas oficiales de las Naciones Unidas, por lo tanto, en principio no existe una lengua original y una lengua meta. Para determinar si variaba la forma escrita de términos en contextos específicos, se analizaron los textos con Wordsmith Tools 5.0. Primero identifiqué las palabras clave de los textos en inglés y castellano y a continuación comparé su forma escrita y el uso de sinónimos tanto en inglés como en castellano. Los resultados mostraron que existen variaciones en la interpretación de términos cuando se escribían en lenguas diferentes y ello podría ser debido a la interferencia entre distintas culturas.

Palabras clave: Lengua específica; términos; variación lingüística; forma escrita.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication in a specific environment has some characteristics that should be mastered by the reader. Some of the most complicated features of specialized texts are, for example, complex noun phrases (Carrió-Pastor 2008), and more specifically, content-based (specific) terms. The terms used in domain-specific texts imply previous knowledge of an established discipline in one area, as on the contrary, the writer and the reader cannot share the code that allows communication.

Sometimes, these specific terms can be transferred easily into target languages. Nevertheless, some of them imply a concept that is not easily transmitted to the reader and, as a consequence, some terms are interpreted differently depending on their syntactic or domain specificity (Carrió-Pastor & Muñiz 2012). This is a fact that can be observed if terms in different languages are compared, and such differences should be

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considered as intrinsic to the very nature of language. Terms are firstly conceived as concepts or images that speakers communicate in a given language. Secondly, they are expressed in a standardised linguistic code that allows the interpretation of ideas or feelings. Cabré (2003: 167) describes this notion, referring to Wünster's ideas:

> [...] to arrive at an autonomous discipline the object of which are no longer terms considered as units of natural language, but concepts considered as clusters of internationally unified features which are expressed by means of equivalent signs of different linguistic and non-linguistic systems.

The fact that terms are completely identical in different languages is a concept that has been proposed by theories as, for example, the Universal Grammar, which considers that languages are equivalent. Nevertheless, quite a lot of studies (Cabré 2003; 2008; Yakhontova 2006; Carbonell 2009; Condamines 2010; Carrió-Pastor 2013) have shown that language equivalence does not exist. Concepts and images are shared but languages transmit them in a wide range of terms. Some of these terms are equivalent, as they represent basic and well-known objects, but the problem arises when a new concept or object needs to be labelled in different languages.

Furthermore, the notion of reader and writer responsibility (Hinds 1987) indicates that there are some texts that reflect the fact that some writers, depending on their culture, prefer to transmit meaning directly or indirectly, using rhetorical conventions that explain the meaning of texts more or less plainly. Recently, some authors such as Hyland (2005; 2008; 2010; 2011), Qi & Liu (2007) and Salager-Meyer (2011) maintain that, in some languages, writers are responsible for effective communication, whereas there are languages in which readers are the ones responsible for understanding a text. This fact entails that understanding a text or specific terms is not such an easy task as that of being aware of semantic connotations.

Giampapa (2004) also points out that the degree to which individuals are able to negotiate their identities in practice depends to a large degree on the cultural capital available to them. Kubota & Lin (2009: 11), define cultural capital as the «[…] knowledge and skills that constitute resources and power that one is endowed with by virtue of socialization and education». The most important of these resources, in terms of producing identity, is language (Bucholtz & Hall 2004).

Additionally, each language is transmitted from generation to generation including cultural concepts and ideologies that are not identified as such by the layman. Language awareness, the use of specific vocabulary and communication strategies are not considered as crucial aspects by society. Lately, marketing campaigns, ideological discourse or political agendas have highlighted all these aspects; as a consequence, the importance of mastering language awareness is more and more relevant. Being conscious of the characteristics of language and how to use them to communicate

adequately are two significant facts that the specialised writer should keep in mind (Carrió-Pastor 2014).

The utilization of the exact term in a particular context is relevant to be able to communicate correctly in a cross-cultural context (Carrió-Pastor & Candel-Mora 2013). Terms can be used by the speaker to convey information about their social class and academic background or simply to show power. This is the main reason why terms and the knowledge of their interpretation in different languages are so important for adequate communication to take place. This is so because terms vary, as Cabré (2003: 178) points out:

> [...] if we observe terminological data in their natural environment in discourse, with variations according to the different functional registers of specialised communication [...] the discourse will be marked by redundancy, conceptual and synonymic variation and, in addition, permit the observation that there is not always a perfect equivalence between languages.

Variations, in a broad sense, are the different terms produced by users who have different linguistic and cultural antecedents, although they share the same knowledge of the specialist content, which by necessity are expressed in language-specific forms. Recently, the interest of researchers in variation seems to have focused mainly on rhetorical aspects or the structure of academic English (Yakhontova 2006; Samraj & Monk 2008; Durrant 2009) or on analysing how genres vary across linguistic and disciplinary lines (Samraj 2004; Charles 2007; Ozturk 2007), while others have focused on investigating variation across communities, associating particular discursive features with different linguistic backgrounds (Yli-Jokipii & Jorgensen 2004; de Haan and van Esch 2005; Hinkel 2009; Schleef 2009, Carrió-Pastor 2013; 2014). These studies have shown that language exhibits considerable variation, which may lead to different ways of cross-cultural communication and the mapping of the evolution of languages.

Focusing on terms, variation means that the same word is interpreted as multiple concepts depending on aspects such as context, aim of the text, and so forth (Ville-Ometz, Royauté & Zasadzinski 2007; Condamines 2010). More particularly, some specific terms, which are used or created in one language for the first time, may not be placed in the same semantic fields in other languages. The conceptual image of the term is the same in all languages although the written form may vary depending on the different terms available or the syntactic constraints of languages. The semantic implications involved in a specific term may be altered when interpreted by a speaker with a general conceptual mapping of language.

Concepts are expressed in one or various terms (synonyms) that are understood by the speakers of a language due to the syntactic and semantic relationships that are implicit in these terms and in their specific context (Rabadán, Labrador & Ramón 2009;

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Condamines 2010). Nevertheless, their written form in another language may produce variation depending on the expertise of the writer and the complexity of the concepts intrinsic to the terms. In order to avoid variation in the written forms of concepts, the internal structure of the genre within a particular professional or academic context constrains the form of the linguistic resources and the functional values they assume in discourse.

In addition, writers do not perceive concepts or express thoughts with the same terms in specific contexts. Their way of communication depends on their linguistic, cognitive, cultural and social background and furthermore, the rules for how language functions are not as general, as fixed or as evident as we suppose (Gas 2006). In this sense, there are several factors that influence variation. One cause of variation could be language transfer. It often implies that the non-native speakers *transfer* elements of their native language onto the speech patterns of the target language (Gas 2006; Carrió-Pastor 2002; 2005; Stockhorst 2010). The conceptual implications of this process should be determined in order to propose a model of language relationships that predicts under which conditions transfer is most likely to occur. Two scholars can use two terms in different ways at the same time, resulting in a set of variations, which conflict with the principles of mono-referentiality and univocal interpretation (Freixa 2002). Another cause of variation could be the non-existence of a single structure in the target language (Carrió-Pastor & Candel-Mora 2013).

In this study, the cultural interference that causes variation in terms is considered as the different linguistic ways of conveying or representing the same reality. The relationship that exists between concepts and terms is not conceived in the same way by speakers due to cross-cultural interferences. This is one of the main reasons why there can be different terms to transmit the same reality. A strict standard production of language is not advisable (and probably not even possible) in an era that is promoting change and development.

In this paper, the main objective is to analyse if the written form of terms varies and interferes with cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, I explore the possible causes of term variation by identifying how the same concept is conceived as different terms in English and in Spanish. Finally, I examine the intrinsic semantic implications of these terms and the potential shifts in meaning which may occur in cross-cultural situations.

2. METHODOLOGY

The corpus of this research was comprised of twenty texts written in English and twenty texts written in Spanish that contained the same information. They were all written in different languages as memorandums of the meetings or the agreements of the United Nations related to specific topics. The texts were extracted from http://www.un.org/en/documents/index.shtml. They were all written in the six official languages

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of the United Nations, i.e. English, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese. There was not an original or target language of the texts, as they were supposedly written originally in different languages at the same time as summaries of different meetings. The meetings are generally given in English, but some speakers also used other languages such as Spanish, French or German. The speakers explain the facts of the meetings and the writers summarise the ideas in memorandums in different languages. As my intention was to determine if the written form of terms varied in a specific setting, I selected texts with the key word *electronics*. Once the texts were selected and compiled, they were saved in a computer-readable form, to enable the data to be analysed using *Wordsmith Tools* 5.0 (Scott 2009).

One function of the *Wordsmith Tools* suite of programmes, *keywords*, proved particularly useful in the identification of terms in the corpus of this study. Nevertheless, manual checking and identification also had to be done in order to look for the synonyms and the context in which some terms were used. I did not include in the results the terms with less than four occurrences, as it was considered that these results did not have a significant effect the whole analysis. I searched these words in the texts in order to identify the cause of this fact and observed that they were avoided in the Spanish texts provided that in that specific example they implied a negative semantic pattern.

I prepared two wordlists and then I extracted the terms with keywords in order to contrast the synonymous terms in the corpus. I selected the 1,000 most frequent terms extracted by the software in the English and Spanish texts in order to identify if variation of terms could be observed. I searched for the most frequent English terms and then their synonyms in Spanish, elaborating a list of semantic fields with synonymous terms in both languages and their occurrences to analyse term variation.

First I identified the most frequent terms in the English texts and then I looked for the synonyms included in each semantic field in Spanish. Finally, I aligned the texts in order to study the context and the sentence position of the terms to identify possible syntactic constrains in the written forms of terms. Comparisons were drawn between the documents written in English and in Spanish in order to determine whether variation was due to cross-cultural interference.

The results showed that there were variations in the frequency of terms in the corpus analysed, as can be observed in the figures and the table included in the Results section. Furthermore, some of the written forms of terms were used in different ways in English and in Spanish. Finally, conclusions were drawn.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The occurrences found in the corpus were the following: a total of 7,251 words were extracted from the English texts and a total of 7,544 words were extracted from

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the Spanish texts. Some examples of the word lists extracted taking into account their frequency can be seen in Figures 1 and 2:

N	Word	Freq.	%	Texts	% emmas Set
44	COMMITTEE	203	0.24	9	45.00
45	ARE	202	0.24	16	80.00
46	AN	201	0.24	16	80.00
47	DRAFT	198	0.23	7	35.00
48	NATIONS	191	0.22	14	70.00
49	ROOM	191	0.22	4	20.00
50	DEVELOPMENT	171	0.20	11	55.00

Figure 1. Word list from the English corpus.

N	Word	Freq.	%	Texts	% emmas Set
34	ENTRE	212	0.24	13	65.00
35	ELECTRÓNICA	211	0.24	18	90.00
36	COMO	206	0.23	17	85.00
37	PROYECTO	205	0.23	13	65.00
38	DESARROLLO	203	0.23	10	50.00
39	NACIONES	199	0.22	14	70.00
40	UNIDAS	198	0.22	14	70.00
41	RESOLUCIÓN	197	0.22	9	45.00
42	TIC	192	0.22	3	15.00

Figure 2. Word list from the Spanish corpus.

Wordsmith identified the words and calculated the frequencies of the occurrences in the texts written in English and in Spanish. Then, the key words of the texts were also analysed. It should be noticed that *Wordsmith Tools* detected more key words in the English texts (322 occurrences) than in the Spanish texts (129 occurrences) in the search.

As can be observed, the number of occurrences in the English and Spanish word lists was quite similar, but once the word lists were processed and the key words were extracted fewer key words from the Spanish texts were obtained, as seen above. After that, the lists were ordered by frequencies and also alphabetically in such a way that terms could be located easily to comment on the results.

A total of 451 English and Spanish key words were identified. I took into account the frequency of the terms in the corpus and then I looked for the different terms that refer to the same concepts (synonyms). An example can be seen in Figure 3, where the English and Spanish occurrences which the software identified are highlighted. The terms were extracted from the list of key words produced by the software, which included words of any syntactic category. The following list is a sample of the one ordered alphabetically and the term frequencies can be seen on the right:

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N	Key word	Freq.
3	ACCESO	15
4	ACCESS	94
5	ACCORDANCE	46
6	ACHIEVING	18
7	ACTION	52
8	ADDRESS	100
9	ADDRESSED	55
10	ADMINISTRACIÓN	11
11	ADMINISTRATION	25
12	ADOPCIÓN	4
13	ADOPTED	59

N	Key word	Freq.
32	ASAMBLEA	24
33	ASÍ	8
34	ASSEMBLY	152

Figure 3. Sample of key words in Spanish (in red) and English (in black).

It can be seen that similar words in English and in Spanish appear automatically below or above the same column. At that point, the synonymous terms were searched for manually in order to analyse the variation of the terms under study. For example, the case of *administration* and *administración* was easily detected, but in the case of words like *action*, the synonyms had to be searched for manually in the counterpart texts.

In Table 1, the most outstanding results that emerged from the analysis of the corpus can be observed. Included in the table are the most frequent English terms found, their occurrences and the most frequent Spanish terms found and their occurrences. The terms which referred to the same concept or were used by the English writers and Spanish writers in the same context were grouped together in order to analyse term variation and the frequencies of each semantic field. I did not include all the key words, as I selected the most frequent ones and from those, I looked for other terms used by translators as synonyms for these initial terms. For example, in the semantic field 1, the initial term was *administration,* and all the terms included in this field corresponded to the interpretation or to the synonyms of this initial term:

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Semantic fields	English terms	Occurrences	Spanish terms	Occurrences
1	Administration Management Jurisdiction *Total:*	25 27 10 *62*	Administración Dirección Gestión *Total:*	52 69 33 *154*
2	Agreement Accordance Mediation *Total:*	42 46 8 *96*	Conformidad Acuerdo Convenio *Total:*	53 37 33 *133*
3	Meeting Session Assembly Association *Total:*	156 114 152 11 *433*	Reunión Sesión Assembly Asamblea *Total:*	143 139 22 152 *456*
4	Auction Sale *Total:*	141 20 *161*	Subasta Venta *Total:*	128 14 *142*
5	Dispute Challenge Debate Complaint *Total:*	193 29 29 15 *266*	Controversias Debate Problema Queja *Total:*	179 33 23 13 *248*
6	Resolution Declaration *Total:*	295 13 *308*	Resolución Declaración Decisión *Total:*	197 43 35 *275*
7	Association Partnership Group *Total:*	11 34 96 *141*	Asociación Grupo Unión *Total:*	51 38 34 *123*
8	Information Knowledge *Total:*	302 14 *316*	Información Conocimiento *Total:*	111 34 *145*
9	Expert *Total:*	63 *63*	Experto Especialista Técnico *Total:*	9 2 32 *43*

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Semantic fields	English terms	Occurrences	Spanish terms	Occurrences
10	Gender	115	Género	4
			Sexo	14
			Condición	24
	Total:	*115*	*Total:*	*42*
11	Development	171	Desarrollo	203
	Developing	49		
	Total:	*220*	*Total:*	*203*
12	Document	146	Documento	232
	Record	68		
	Total:	*214*	*Total:*	*232*
13	Committee	210	Comisión	266
	Board	11	Comité	28
	Commission	81		
	Total:	*302*	*Total:*	*294*
14	Agenda	122	Agenda	56
			Orden (del día)	16
	Total:	*122*	*Total:*	*72*
15	Project	21	Proyecto	205
	Research	14	Investigación	15
	Proposal	32		
	Plan	11		
	Total:	*78*	*Total:*	*220*

Table 1. Occurrences of the corpus divided into semantic fields.

It should be noticed that term variation changed depending on the semantic field. In Table 1, it can be observed that in semantic field 9, for example, one term in English (*expert*) is the equivalent to three terms in Spanish (*experto, especialista, técnico*). The contrary happens in fields 11 and 12, where there is one word in the semantic field in Spanish (*desarrollo, document*) but two in English for the same concept. This may be caused because the English and Spanish writers preferred to specify the terms and also because there were fewer lexical resources in the language (synonyms).

It should also be mentioned here that some terms in English appeared in the Spanish texts. As an example, the term *assembly* has been included in semantic field 3 as this was one of the most frequent terms in the Spanish texts. The cause of this may be that the speaker was giving the speech in English and the writers considered that this term was well-known and decided to include it in the Spanish memorandum. I also believe that some of the other cases found of English terms used in the Spanish texts may be mistakes produced by the pressure of the moment

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when taking notes during the meetings in the United Nations, as these terms were not used in a systematic way.

Furthermore, a fact that is noticeable in the analysis of the corpus is that the total number of occurrences found in each semantic field of the Spanish terms did not correspond to the total number of occurrences found in the semantic fields of the English terms. In most cases, there was a greater number of occurrences of the key terms in English. For example, in field 5, the four synonyms occurred 266 times in English versus 248 in Spanish; in field 10, the term *gender* occurred 115 times versus 42 occurrences of three different synonyms in Spanish.

In order to analyse the total number of occurrences, the total data of the fifteen semantic fields were compared in Figure 4:
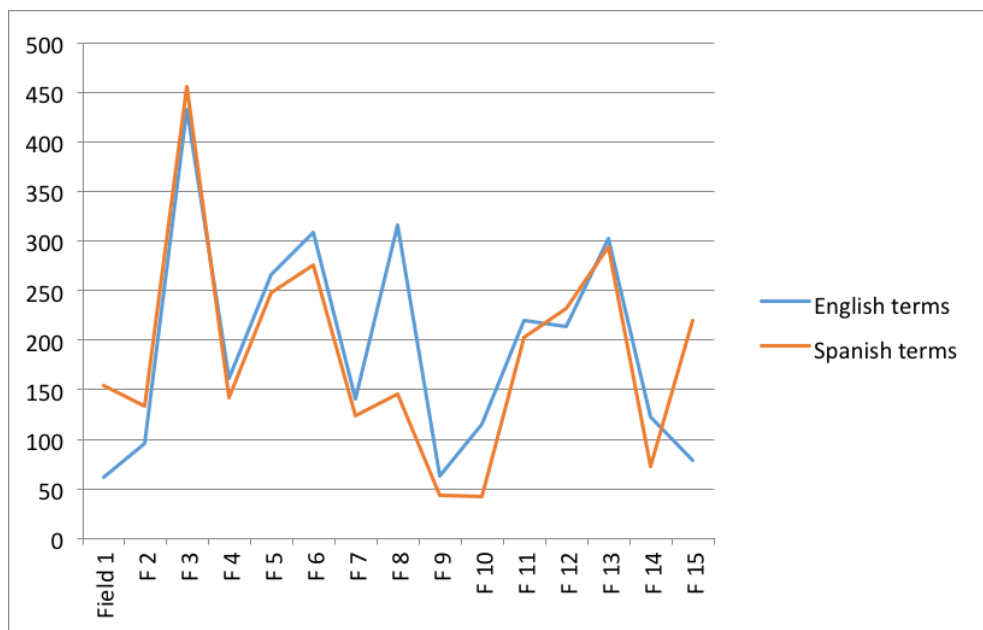

Figure 4. Comparison of the total number of occurrences in the semantic fields.

The comparison of the semantic fields gives us an idea of the variation that was found in the study. It should be noticed that semantic fields 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13 were used in a similar way by the Spanish and English writers. On the contrary, the semantic fields 1, 2, 6, 8, 10, 14 and 15 varied in the total results obtained. The writers did not use terms to refer to the same semantic field and preferred the use of pronouns or in some cases, the terms were eliminated in the texts. It could be observed that there was not a fixed pattern that could be used to identify the causes of term variation in the English and Spanish texts.

After that, with the aim of studying some of the causes of the variation found in the corpus, the terms were analysed in their context. The objective of this analysis was to study if the context constrained term variation or not. Some examples can be seen in Figures 5 and 6:

N Concordance
7   the choices and challengesthat public administration frameworks need to make
8   across the actions of public administration institutions. • Involvement
9   agendas and policies. • Linking public administration reform strategies and
10   violence against women 52. Public administration frameworks can take
11   education and knowledge. 31. Public administration e-strategies that engage
12   awareness within all aspects of public administration willboth improve the

Figure 5. Example of term in context in the English corpus.

N Concordance
5   horas, en el Salón del Consejo de Administración Fiduciaria. [Quedan
6   de miembros de la Comisión de Administración Pública Internacional:
7   horas, en el Salón del Consejo de Administración Fiduciaria, la Oficina de

Figure 6. Example of term in context in the Spanish corpus.

Unfortunately, this analysis did not support any of the hypotheses of the research. Some of the occurrences of the terms varied so much that it made me analyse the corpus again manually, which resulted in the confirmation of my initial findings. As an example, let us consider what happened in semantic field 8, where the term *information* had 302 occurrences while the Spanish term *información* had only 111 occurrences. I observed that, in most of the cases, the Spanish writers preferred to avoid entirely the use of the Spanish term *información* and either substituted for it by using pronouns or eliminated it. In this sense, it can be stated that although there was only one speech, the writers used term variation or other rhetorical strategies to transmit information.

The variation of terms found in the Spanish texts can be seen in more detail in the following sample sentences extracted from the English and Spanish texts which include the term *dispute* and two synonyms in Spanish:

[Ex.1]
«Online *dispute* resolution has emerged as a desirable option for the resolution of such *disputes*».
«La solución de *controversias* por via electronica se ha llegado a considerar una opción conveniente para hacer frente a ese *problema*».

This example shows how Spanish writers varied the terms they used, even when the English writer repeated the same term. In this particular case, the variation also included the grammatical change from the plural form (*disputes*) to one singular form (*problema*)

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and to a plural form (*controversias*). In this sense, the Spanish writer conceptualised the idea and preferred the use of variation purportedly to enrich the text.

However, the opposite tendency was also detected. In the following example, the Spanish writers repeated the term *quejas*, but the English writers preferred to use an equivalent of the English term *dispute,* i.e. *complaints*:

> [Ex. 2]
> «In 2009, the BBB system handled nearly one million consumer *disputes*. The BBB reported a substantial increase in cross-border *complaints* in 2009».
> «En 2009, la red BBB tramitó cerca de un millón de *quejas* de consumidores. La BBB denunció un importante aumento de las *quejas* transfronterizas en 2009».

This example shows that there was not a single original text and corresponding translated text, as variation can be observed in both the English and the Spanish texts. It was also observed that some synonyms, as for example, in the case of the English word *dispute*, the most common one was *controversia* and some other synonym words such as *disputa, reto* or *discusión* had very few occurrences. Other examples were the words *pacto*, with only three occurrences as a synonym of *acuerdo* or the word *determination* with only two occurrences as a synonym of *resolution*. These terms were not included in the results shown in Table 1 as their occurrences were very low.

The results shown in Table 1 are an example of term variation. Henceforth they may be used to map the cultural interferences which cause term variation, given that it has been shown in the results that speakers of different languages use diverse terms to express the same concepts. We have seen how some semantic fields included more variation in English than in Spanish (11, 12, 13, 15), while others included more variation in Spanish than in English (6, 9, 10, 14). Some of them were clearly equivalents, as can be observed in semantic fields 4 and 8, in which *subasta* and *venta* are seen to be equal to *auction* and *sale* and *información* and *conocimiento* are equal to *information* and *knowledge*. On the contrary, in some terms I observed a wide variety of synonyms, as for example, in semantic fields 1, 3 and 5, where a number of different terms were used in English and in Spanish to refer to the same semantic field or concept.

Besides, some English terms such as *meeting, dispute* or *agreement* were found to vary broadly within the same semantic field as polisemantic terms. The writers used different terms for the same concept and presented a range of possibilities to express it. On the contrary, some terms such as *expert, agenda* or *gender* were used as monosemantic terms in English. The English writers did not use synonyms (variation) in the memorandums but it was observed that the Spanish writers did use variation to refer to these semantic fields, thereby enriching the vocabulary and the texts. The same case can be observed in the Spanish texts: the terms *documento* and *desarrollo* were used as monosemantic terms while they were polisemantic terms in English.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained after the analysis of the corpus showed evidence for term variation. It has to be mentioned that one of the objectives of this study was to detect term variation in a specific setting and this was the reason why the texts included in the corpus analysed were compiled using the key word *electronics*. Nevertheless, the memorandums of the United Nations are used for the sole purpose of making public the agreements of its Committees and, as a result, the vocabulary used is not specific given that the speeches and texts are not addressed to a specialized reader.

Nevertheless, as the main objective of the research was to show if the written form of terms in English and Spanish varied and interfered with cross-cultural communication, the analysis of the corpus selected was carried out. As can be observed above in Table 1, fifteen semantic fields were identified after the analysis of the texts. It was taken into account the number of occurrences found in the English and Spanish texts to include the terms in the concepts and this determined the number of semantic fields.

It was found that there were clear cases of exact term equivalences between English and Spanish that were used interchangeably (*auction-subasta*), and there were also clear cases of wide variation in terms (*gender-género, sexo, condición*). Given the fact that the message was univocal and the English and Spanish writers used different terms to write the memorandums, one possible reason of variation could be the individual criteria of the writers to enrich the text.

Another interesting finding was that there were more key words in the English than in the Spanish texts. This could have been caused because the Spanish writers used fewer synonymous words, as they may have thought the texts could be read by non specialist readers. Nevertheless, the English and Spanish writers used similar degrees of term variation in seven of the semantic fields analysed, i.e. similar synonyms were used in these fields. This means that the number of key words did not influence in the use synonymy in the Spanish texts.

Another outstanding feature of the analysis of the corpus was the fact that the number of occurrences found in each semantic field in the English and Spanish texts did not correspond. It should be taken into account that the use of language is not an exact science that can be measured in terms of frequencies. I believe that writers used rhetorical strategies to provide richness and diversity to the texts and this could be one of the causes of the term variation found in this research. The results extracted in this study showed that some of the occurrences of the terms varied greatly in the English and the Spanish texts. I believe this fact was caused because the English and Spanish writers used synonyms to vary the lexical repertoire of the texts and even eliminated some terms in the Spanish texts. Cultural interference may be the cause of this variation, since the writers with different cultural and academic backgrounds may have considered that some words should not be

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repeated in the same sentence (see, for example, the term *dispute* in example 2 in the Results section).

The term variation detected after this analysis may help us to map the cultural interferences produced when writers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds transmit information. Some researchers have been studying several aspects related to cultural interference (Hinkel 2009; Carbonell 2009; Schleef 2009; Carrió-Pastor 2013), but I think greater efforts should be made to identify term variation and the cognitive aspects related to this. Every language implies cultural aspects that are transmitted through linguistic features that should be identified in order to mark the boundary of communication. As future research, it would be useful to contrast some aspects such as courtesy, politeness or the non-existence of a term in a language to identify the process of term selection and use. Also, a study of the French, Chinese, Arabic or Russian memorandums in the United Nations may be useful to map term variation across a wider range of languages and provide further evidence of cultural interference.

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